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Reeves plans tax rise amid alarm over 'black hole'

Larry Elliott
Peter Walker

Rachel Reeves is planning to raise taxes, cut spending and get tough on benefits in October's budget amid Treasury alarm that the pick-up in the economy has failed to improve the poor state of the public finances.

With the latest official set of borrowing figures due out today, the chancellor is insisting she will still have a substantial black hole to fill despite stronger than expected growth in the first half of 2024.

Reeves is concerned at official figures showing that borrowing was already running more than £3bn higher in the first three months of the financial year from April to June than forecast by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility at the time of Jeremy Hunt's March budget.

The chancellor announced last month that she was scrapping winter fuel payments for most pensioners, shelving plans for social care reform and axing road, rail and hospital investment as the first stage of a plan to reduce borrowing.

But the Treasury made clear last

night that further hard choices would need to be made when Reeves delivers the first Labour budget since 2010 on 30 October.

A source said: "We don't accept the positive economic inheritance line, given the decade that went before - but regardless, nothing in the recent data can offset the scale of the black hole in the public finances that we're looking at."

Traditionally, new chancellors seek to get bad news out of the way in the first budget after an election - a time when they can seek to blame their predecessors for any unpopular decisions they make.

Reeves will receive the OBR's initial assessment of the state of the economy early next month but believes there is nothing to suggest the government's underlying financial position is getting any better.

The International Monetary Fund has said the UK would need to see a one percentage point boost to its growth rate in order to relieve the pressures on the public finances caused by an ageing population and the transition to a zero carbon economy.

Among the changes

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Eating red meat raises risk of type 2 diabetes

Andrew Gregory
Health editor

Eating processed or red meat increases the risk of type 2 diabetes, with two slices of ham a day raising the danger by 15%, the largest study of its kind suggests.

Research led by the University of Cambridge and involving 2 million people provides the world's most comprehensive evidence yet of a link between meat and the disease that presents one of the most pressing dangers to global health.

More than 400 million people around the

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Royal gesture King sees tributes to Southport victims

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PHOTOGRAPH: VICTORIA JONES/SHUTTERSTOCK

Six presumed dead after sinking of superyacht

Jamie Grierson
Lorenzo Tondo Porticello
Matthew Weaver

Six people are now presumed dead after the superyacht they were onboard sank in a sudden, violent storm off the coast of Sicily.

Divers yesterday tried in vain to gain access to the inside of the sunken 56-metre luxury vessel Bayesian, where rescue crews believe those missing may have been trapped.

Those unaccounted for are the tech entrepreneur Mike Lynch, his teenage daughter Hannah Lynch, the Morgan Stanley International bank

chairman, Jonathan Bloomer, his wife, Judy Bloomer, the lawyer Chris Morvillo and his wife, Neda Morvillo.

Rescuers said they were working on the assumption that the boat sank quickly after being hit by a waterspout in a storm at about 5am on Monday. Vincenzo Zagarola of the Italian coastguard confirmed there had been no sign of the missing passengers more than 36 hours into the rescue mission.

He said: "We do not exclude that they are not inside the boat, but we know the boat sank quickly. We suppose that

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News



◀ The NHS advises those eating more than 90g of red meat or processed meat such as sausages and ham a day to cut down to 70g or less

PHOTOGRAPH: STEVE ALLEN TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY/ALAMY

Eating two slices of ham a day 'can raise risk of type 2 diabetes by 15%'

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world have been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, which is a major cause of blindness, kidney failure, heart attacks, stroke and lower limb amputation.

As well as maintaining a healthy weight and moving more, evidence increasingly suggests one of the main ways to lower the risk of the disease is to improve your diet.

Experts who conducted a meta-analysis of data involving 1.97 million adults from 20 countries across Europe, the Americas, the eastern Mediterranean, south-east Asia and the western Pacific say the results support recommendations to limit the consumption of processed and red meat.

Their findings were published in the Lancet Diabetes and Endocrinology journal.

“Our research provides the most comprehensive evidence to date of

an association between eating processed meat and unprocessed red meat and a higher future risk of type 2 diabetes,” said Prof Nita Forouhi, a senior author of the study from Cambridge.

“It supports recommendations to limit the consumption of processed meat and unprocessed red meat to reduce type 2 diabetes cases in the population.”

Researchers analysed data from 31 study cohorts through InterConnect – a project funded by the EU to understand more about type 2 diabetes and obesity across different populations.

They found habitual consumption of 50 grams of processed meat a day – equivalent to two slices of ham – was associated with a 15% higher risk of type 2 diabetes in the next 10 years.

The consumption of 100 grams of unprocessed red meat a day – the equivalent of a small steak – was associated with a 10% higher risk of the disease.

Habitual consumption of 100 grams of poultry a day was associated with an 8% higher risk. But when further analyses were conducted to test the findings under different scenarios the association for poultry consumption became weaker.

The associations with type 2 diabetes for processed meat and unprocessed red meat persisted, the researchers said.

“While our findings provide more comprehensive evidence on the association between poultry

‘It supports recommendations to limit consumption of processed meat’

Prof Nita Forouhi
University of Cambridge

consumption and type 2 diabetes than was previously available, the link remains uncertain and needs to be investigated further,” said Forouhi.

In the UK, the NHS advises those eating more than 90g of red meat such as beef, lamb, mutton, pork, veal, venison and goat, or processed meat such as sausages, bacon, ham, salami and corned beef a day to cut down to 70g or less.

The InterConnect data allowed the research team to “more easily account for different factors, such as lifestyle or health behaviours, that may affect the association between meat consumption and diabetes”, the researchers said.

Dr Chunxiao Li, the lead author and also of Cambridge, said that while previous studies pooled together existing results, the new analysis examined data from individual participants in each study.

That technique, explained Prof Nick Wareham, director of the MRC epidemiology unit at Cambridge and a senior author on the paper, “allowed us to provide more concrete evidence of the link between consumption of different types of meat and type 2 diabetes than was previously possible”.

Experts not involved with the research said that while it only proved an association and not causation, the results aligned with current healthy eating recommendations.

Prof Naveed Sattar, of the University of Glasgow, said: “This is an important study which, despite the inevitable observational nature of the evidence, is very well done.”

“The data suggest cutting red and processed meats from diets may not only protect people from heart disease and stroke but also from type 2 diabetes, a disease on the rise worldwide.”

Dr Duane Mellor, of Aston University, said the overall message to moderate meat intake was in line with advice to reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes, including a diet that promoted vegetables, fruit, nuts, seeds, beans, peas and lentils. “This should be accompanied by regular physical activity to minimise risk of developing type 2 diabetes,” Mellor added.

Reeves plans tax rise amid alarm over public finances

Continued from page 1

Reeves is believed to be considering in her budget are:

- Raising more money from inheritance tax and capital gains tax.
- Sticking to plans for a 1% increase in public spending even though it would involve cuts for some Whitehall departments.
- Rejecting pressure to scrap the two-child benefit cap.
- Changing the way debt is measured to exclude the Bank of England.

Reeves said before the election that she would inherit the worst public finances of any chancellor since the second world war and after arriving

at the Treasury said the position was even worse than she had thought.

She accused the Conservatives of “covering up” the true state of the public finances as she announced an initial £5.5bn of savings to tackle a forecast £22bn overspend by Whitehall departments.

The subsequent release of figures showing the UK economy grew by 0.6% between April and June led to speculation that there might be a knock-on effect on the public finances that might allow Reeves to limit the pain in her October budget. The OBR is expected to revise up its 0.8% growth forecast for the year as a whole in its assessment for the October budget.

But the Treasury pointed out that a stronger than expected recovery in the first half of 2024 – when the UK was the fastest growing economy in the G7 – had merely made up for the soft patch in the second half of 2023, when the economy contracted for two quarters in succession and was technically in recession.

Figures from the Office for National

Statistics last month showed that borrowing in the first three months of the 2024-25 financial years stood at £49.8bn – £3.2bn higher than the OBR anticipated. Government spending between April and June totalled £297.3bn – £4.6bn more than in the same period a year earlier – partly as a result of the impact of inflation on benefits and departmental spending.

Although the borrowing figures are often revised down as fresh data comes in, the Treasury said that borrowing is on course to exceed the OBR’s £87bn forecast for 2024-25 as a whole. The OBR said in March that



▲ Rachel Reeves is to deliver the first Labour budget since 2010 in October

the UK would barely meet the rule that the state’s debt should be falling as a share of national income within five years.

While Labour has sought to stress the poor state of the public finances, the Conservatives have tried equally hard to disparage Reeves’ assessment of the economy, arguing that the new government is trying to find political cover for already-planned tax rises due in the budget.

After last week’s stronger-than-expected growth figures, Hunt, now the shadow chancellor, said they were “further proof that Labour have inherited a growing and resilient economy. The chancellor’s attempt to blame her economic inheritance on her decision to raise taxes – tax rises she had always planned – will not wash with the public.”

James Cleverly, one of the contenders to replace Rishi Sunak as Conservative leader, said Labour’s economic inheritance was very different to how ministers billed it: “The economy is growing, unemployment is down, inflation under control.”

'My end of life dog': Delon's plan to have pet killed and buried with him is vetoed by family

Kim Willsher

Charny-Orée-de-Puisaye

The late French actor Alain Delon's wish that his pet dog be put down and buried with him has been rejected by his children after an outcry from animal rights campaigners.

The actor, who died aged 88 on Sunday, had said he wished the animal, a 10-year-old Belgian malinois called Loubo, to be "put to sleep" and laid in his grave in the cemetery at his home in the village of Douchy in the department of Loiret.

Yesterday, after activists expressed dismay at the prospect of a healthy animal being put down and offered to find the dog a new home, it was announced Loubo would live.

The Brigitte Bardot Foundation said Delon's daughter, Anouchka, had confirmed the family would keep the dog. "I've just had Anouchka Delon on the phone and she has told me that Loubo is part of the family and will be kept. The dog will not be put down," a foundation spokesperson said.

Earlier in the day, sparking some confusion, the foundation had announced on social media the dog would be spared before deleting the posts. The SPA, France's equivalent of the RSPCA, was among a number of animal organisations that had expressed concern at Delon's declared wish for his companion to be put down, writing: "The life of an animal should not depend on that of a human. The SPA is happy to take his dog and find it a family."

There is no law in France preventing owners putting down their animals but it is for individual vets to decide whether to carry out their wishes. Delon created a chapel in a cemetery containing the remains of at least 35 of his dogs in the wooded grounds of his home, La Brûlerie, 85 miles south-east of Paris, which he



▲ Alain Delon with some of his dogs in 1984. He had a cemetery on his estate where at least 35 were buried

PHOTOGRAPH: MICHEL GINFRAY/GETTY IMAGES

'Anouchka Delon has told me Loubo is part of the family and will be kept. The dog will not be put down'

Spokesperson Brigitte Bardot Foundation

bought in the early 1970s. It was here on Sunday, in a rare show of unity, that his three children, Anthony, 59, Anouchka, 33, and Alain-Fabien, 30, announced their father had died peacefully with them at his side. Loubo, adopted from a refuge by Delon in 2014, was included in the children's announcement of the actor's death. "Alain-Fabien, Anouchka, Anthony, as well as Loubo, are deeply saddened to announce the passing of their father," their joint statement read.

Speaking to Paris Match in 2018, the star had said of Loubo: "He's my end of life dog. I love him like a child." He added: "I've had 50 dogs in my life, but I have a special relationship



◀ Delon in 1960. He had 50 dogs in his life but Loubo was 'special'

PHOTOGRAPH: MPTVIMAGES/EYEVINE



Alain Delon with his daughter Anouchka

with this one. He misses me when I'm not there."

He added: "If I die before him, I'll ask the vet to take us away together. He'll put him to sleep in my arms. I'd rather do that than know that he'll let himself die on my grave with so much suffering."

After that interview, the animal association 30 Million Friends condemned what it called the "convenience" euthanasia of a perfectly healthy dog, saying it hoped Loubo would be adopted.

"If he had to go before Loubo, his faithful malinois, and no one - which I doubt - was in a position to take care of him, the 30 Million Friends Foundation would obviously take on the task of finding someone trustworthy to ensure his wellbeing," Reha Hutin, the foundation's president said.

Delon's daughter Anouchka posted a photograph of Loubo on Instagram in July last year with the message: "Wherever there's an unfortunate person, God sends a dog. Thank you, Loubo, for being there for your master." In March this year she posted another picture of Loubo on guard outside Delon's home with the caption: "Guardian of the temple ... With him there's no betrayal, no calculation, only love."

In a 1996 television interview, when asked what animal he would choose to be reincarnated as, Delon replied without hesitation: "A malinois." The breed, also known as the Belgian shepherd, can live for between 14 and 16 years.

Reports suggest Delon will be buried at his Douchy home "in the strictest privacy" this week though no further details have been given by the family. Before his death the actor said he did not want a national ceremony similar to that organised after the deaths of Johnny Hallyday and Charles Aznavour, but wished to be buried "like anyone else".



Brigitte Bardot's charity got involved in the case

Lack of research by puppy buyers 'devastating' to animals' welfare

Nicola Davis

Science correspondent

Would-be dog owners are buying puppies with little thought, effort or research, the UK's leading dog breeding organisation has said, which has a "devastating" effect on the animals' welfare.

According to research by the Kennel Club, almost a third (29%) of dog owners in the UK spent less than a



▲ Most puppy buyers were not asked about their suitability as owners

day researching their decision and the breeder.

The survey found 34% of puppy buyers were unwilling to travel beyond their county for their puppy, while a quarter reported they would not travel for more than an hour.

Of the latter, 48% said convenience was a factor, while 53% said they had not seen the environment in which the puppy was raised. More than three-quarters reported they were not asked about their suitability as dog owners.

Charlotte McNamara, the head of health at the Kennel Club, said: "This research paints an alarming picture of a nation of puppy buyers making quick and sometimes careless

decisions when it comes to where and how to get a dog. Though it may be unintentional, this behaviour is enabling duplicitous rogue puppy sellers to flourish and operate with little scrutiny, with devastating consequences for puppy welfare."

The survey reveals almost one in five puppies fell sick or died before their first birthday, with the figure even higher - at almost one in three (31%) - for puppies bought by owners who said they did very little research before purchasing them.

The survey found 26% of dog owners said they could not identify a rogue breeder or puppy-selling scam, while 28% said they might have unintentionally bought from

a puppy farm, rising to 40% among those who said they spent less than a day researching their choice.

The survey involved 2,610 people who bought puppies in the last 10 years and was carried out in August by Censuswide as part of the Kennel Club's Be Puppywise campaign.

The key steps to take before buying a puppy are set out on the campaign's web page.

David Bowles, the head of public affairs at the RSPCA, recommended those looking to buy a puppy use the Kennel Club's "puppy contract" - a free toolkit to help people buy and breed puppies responsibly - but urged people to consider adopting from a rescue centre.

▼ Rescuers off the coast of Porticello yesterday. Divers tried in vain to gain access to the yacht's cabins
PHOTOGRAPH: GUGLIELMO MANGIAPANE/REUTERS



Six presumed dead as divers try to access cabins on superyacht

Continued from page 1

the six people missing may not have had time to get out." Asked about the likelihood of them being alive, he said: "Never say never, but reasonably the answer should be not."

The national director of Italy's fire-fighting department divers, Giuseppe Petrone, told the Guardian his team of specialist divers had managed to locate a breach in the boat's hull and was working to open a passage to reach the cabins, where they hoped to find the bodies of the missing.

The divers - who have arrived from Rome, Sassari, Cagliari and Palermo - are hampered by debris obstructing the boat's cabins and they need to surface after 11 minutes because the wreck is lying about 50 metres below the surface.

Marco Tilotta, who is in charge of firefighter divers from Palermo, said there were numerous challenges in recovering the bodies. "The greatest challenge is the depth, which

does not allow for immediate interventions. You have to consider that when we go underwater, we have three minutes to descend and eight minutes to work on the wreck. Then we have to begin the ascent phase.

"There is also the problem of accessing the vessel with all the belongings inside and the fact that the boat is positioned at 90 degrees. We have not yet entered the boat. We plan to do so soon and inspect every inch of the vessel."

The UK's Marine Accident Investigation Branch confirmed yesterday that four of its inspectors were being deployed to Palermo.

The Italian coastguard confirmed that a body recovered on Monday was that of the vessel's chef, Recaldo Thomas. He had dual Canadian and Antiguan citizenship and was one of 10 crew members onboard.

Tilotta said that apart from that discovery, no others had been located. Fifteen people have so far been rescued, including Lynch's wife, Angela

Bacares, who owned the boat, and a one-year-old girl who was saved by her mother.

As local residents came to terms with the events, those also caught up in the storm gave information to crews at the dock in Porticello, close to where the vessel sank.

Karsten Borner, 69, the captain of a boat that was alongside the Bayesian, said the vessel carrying Lynch and 21 other people sank within minutes. "We were also awakened by the storm," Karsten said. "The first thing I did was to start the engines of my sailboat to give more stability to the vessel. I don't know if the Bayesian did the same. It seems like they were also suddenly caught by the storm."

"After securing our boat, we immediately approached the Bayesian. But it had already sunk.

"I have never seen a vessel of this size go down so quickly. Within a few minutes, there was nothing left. Then we saw the raft with the 15 passengers. It was a tragedy."

Fabio Cefalù, 36, a fisher from Porticello, was one of the first to attempt to help the Bayesian. "I arrived at the port at 3.30 for a fishing trip," he said. "But when we saw the first flashes of lightning, we decided to stop. At 3.55, a mini tornado arrived ... It hit the sailboat head-on. They were in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Cefalù said the whirlwind lasted about "10 minutes with strong winds and rain". He added: "We saw a flare 500 metres from the dock. We went to see what had happened. We only

saw the floating debris. We immediately called the coastguard. The sea was terrible. The wind very strong.

"I thought I would find someone in the sea, but nothing. The boat had disappeared from the radar. In my opinion, the missing passengers are still onboard. They didn't have time to get out."

The British ambassador to Italy, Edward Llewellyn, said: "It's a tragedy. I met with the survivors. I wanted to express my solidarity and that of the British embassy."

Bayesian had completed a number of sailings in recent days, calling at various ports in Sicily, according to the ship-tracking website VesselFinder. The superyacht can accommodate up to 12 guests in six suites and was listed for hire for up to €195,000 (£166,000) a week.

Lynch co-founded Autonomy, a software business that became one of the shining lights of the UK tech scene, in the mid-90s.

He spent much of the past decade in court defending his name against allegations of fraud related to the sale of Autonomy to the US tech company Hewlett-Packard for \$11bn. He was acquitted by a jury in San Francisco in June. In a separate development on Monday, it emerged that Lynch's co-defendant at the US trial, Stephen Chamberlain, died after being hit by a car while out running in Cambridgeshire.



▲ The body of ship's chef Recaldo Thomas was recovered on Monday

'When cold air arrives it's explosive'
How climate crisis fuelled fatal storm

Record temperatures in the Mediterranean Sea have contributed to the freak storm that sank a superyacht off the coast of Sicily, with similar extreme events expected to increase in frequency and intensity due to the climate crisis, Italian scientists have said.

The Bayesian yacht is thought to have been struck off the coast of Porticello, near Palermo, by a tornadic waterspout, a whirling column of air and water mist that has the same characteristics as a land tornado.

Sea temperatures in the Mediterranean have reached 30C, three degrees higher than average, during two months of consecutive heatwaves, the most recent of which was broken at the weekend by a sudden blast of cold air and heavy storms across Italy.

Sicily had also been grappling with a months-long drought. The sea surface temperature around the island on Monday was between 27.3C and 30.5C.

Luca Mercalli, the president of the Italian Meteorological Society, said the high temperatures created a huge amount of energy, making storms more intense.

"Thirty years ago an event of this kind might have brought winds of 100kmh [62mph]," he said. "Today it's 150kmh because sea temperatures of three degrees higher mean an enormous quantity of energy for storms, and when cold air arrives it's explosive."

Bayesian left the Sicilian port of Milazzo on 14 August, sailing for a few days around the Aeolian Islands and off the historic coastal village of Cefalù. It moored about 700 metres off the port of Porticello after its journey was disrupted by bad weather.

The powerful waterspout lasted just minutes.

"Whoever was in that position at that time would have experienced these conditions," said Mercalli. "Episodes of such speed and intensity mean that even if you are prepared, it is difficult to react in time."

Roberto Danavaro, a marine biologist, said there was "an

absolute direct link" between the high sea temperatures this summer and the storm. Several other tornadoes have recently occurred close to Italy's coastline, including in the Adriatic and off Liguria, in northern Italy.

In May last year, a similar storm killed four people when their tourist boat capsized on Lake Maggiore, near the Alps.

"Occurrences of tornadoes or Mediterranean hurricanes have been increasing in frequency over the last 10 to 15 years," said Danavaro. "And based on the high temperatures, we are likely to see more in September and October. The heat of this summer will not bring anything good."

Paolo Sottocorona, a meteorologist, said a waterspout of the intensity that struck Bayesian was "the extreme of the extreme".

"This is because the situation in the Mediterranean has reached temperatures that were never reached before, and this brings instability," he said. "Unfortunately these events, which were once anomalous, in the sense they almost never happened, are now beginning to occur more often. This is a sign of climate change."

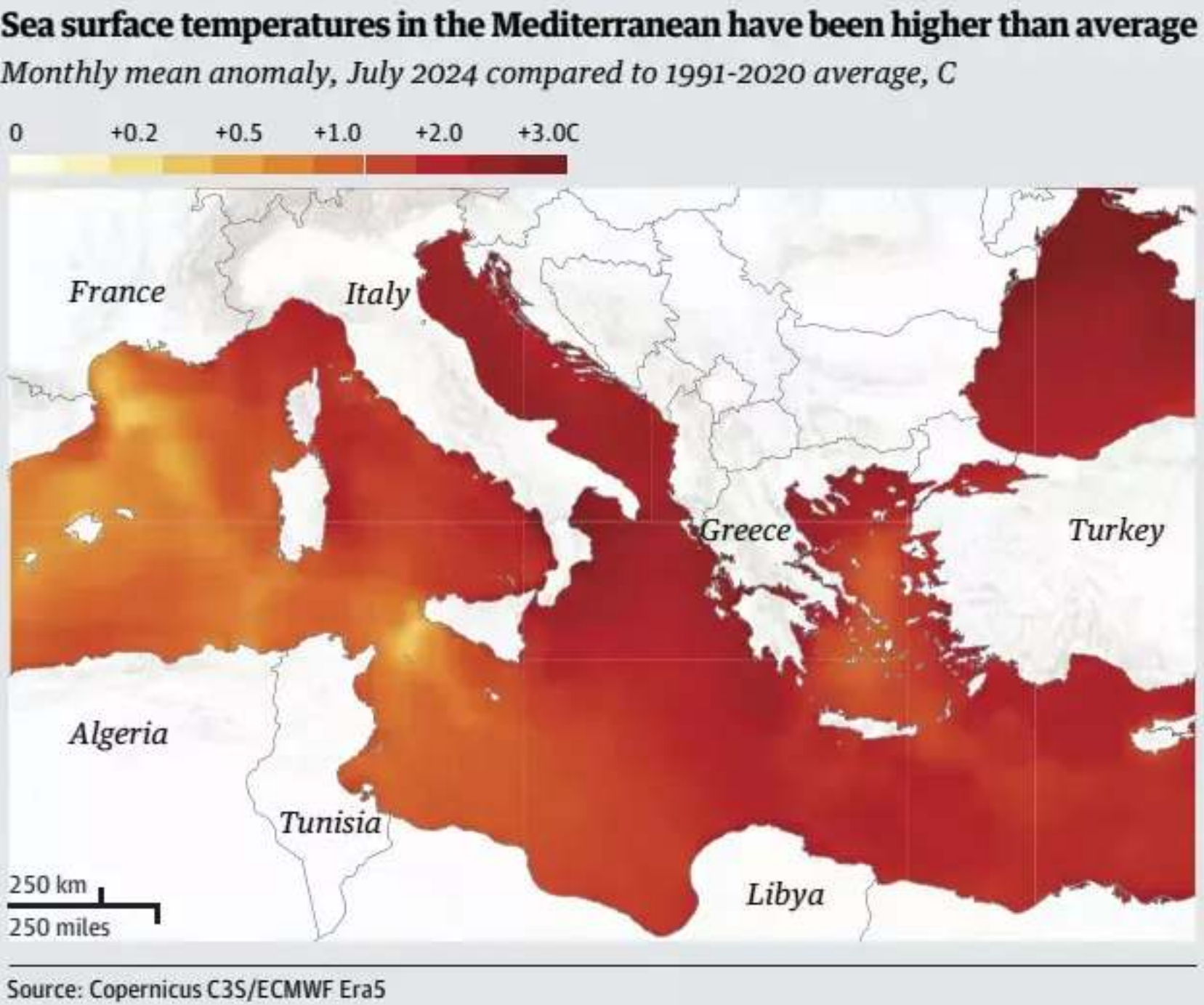
The high sea temperature has affected the Adriatic, which is part of the Mediterranean, triggering the widespread proliferation of *mucillagine*, or marine mucilage, a thick, slimy white-yellow substance formed of various microalgae that accumulates on the seabed or the surface.

Italy has become known as one of Europe's climate risk hotspots owing to a range of vulnerabilities including its location, diverse topography and densely inhabited Mediterranean coastal areas.

In the last three years, the country has been hit by devastating floods, landslides, wildfires, record-breaking heatwaves and the collapse of a glacier in the Dolomites which killed 11 hikers.

In 2023, there were 378 extreme climate events in Italy, an increase of 22% on 2022, according to the environmental agency, Legambiente. "These events are only going to get more frequent and more intense," said Mercalli.

Angela Giuffrida Rome



'Still waiting for news'
The six people missing

Jane Croft
Simon Goodley
Matthew Weaver

Mike Lynch

The 59-year-old millionaire created a global technology company. In June he was cleared of 15 counts of fraud he had faced in the US over the \$11.1bn purchase of his firm, Autonomy, by Hewlett-Packard.

Lynch was raised by Irish-born parents near Chelmsford in Essex; his mother was a nurse and his father a firefighter. He studied physics, mathematics and biochemistry at Cambridge University, eventually specialising in adaptive pattern recognition. His doctoral thesis is reportedly one of the most widely read pieces of research in the university library.

After launching a few early technology startups - including one that specialised in automatic number plate, fingerprint and facial recognition software for the police - he created Autonomy in 1996. Its software was used by companies to analyse huge caches of data and partly owed its efficacy to Bayesian inference, a statistical theory devised by the 18th-century statistician, philosopher and minister Thomas Bayes.

Lynch's triumphs led to him becoming a science adviser to David Cameron, the then prime minister, and a non-executive director of the BBC, as well as receiving an OBE in 2006 for services to enterprise.

However, while Autonomy impressed HP enough to pay more than \$11bn for the company in 2011, it only took a year for the US computing company to take an \$8.8bn writedown on its acquisition, saying it had discovered "serious accounting improprieties". Lynch in effect had been involved in defending his reputation ever since and always denied allegations of wrongdoing.

Hannah Lynch

The 18-year-old was celebrating her A-level results last week after reportedly securing a place to read English at Oxford University.

She is one of Lynch's two

daughters. She secured her A-levels at Latymer Upper School, a private school in Hammersmith in west London, where she won a number of prizes. The school confirmed she attended from 2017 to 2024. In a statement, a spokesperson said: "We are all incredibly shocked by the news that Hannah and her father are among those missing in this tragic incident and our thoughts are with their family and everyone involved as we await further updates."

Jonathan Bloomer

Bloomer, 70, is a non-executive director at Autonomy, where he served as chair of the audit committee. He testified as a witness in a high court civil trial in 2019 brought against Lynch by HP over its purchase of Autonomy.



▲ Mike Lynch, 59, founded the software company Autonomy



▲ Jonathan Bloomer, 70, is a non-executive director of Autonomy



▲ Chris Morvillo, 59, is a partner at the law firm Clifford Chance

Bloomer studied physics at Imperial College, London and joined the insurance group Prudential in 1995 from the now defunct Arthur Andersen, where he had spent 20 years and become a partner auditing insurance and finance companies.

In recent years he took up a number of senior roles including chairman of Morgan Stanley International from November 2016, and became chairman of Hiscox, the insurer, in July 2023.

Aki Hussain, the Hiscox group chief executive officer, said: "We are deeply shocked and saddened by this tragic event. Our thoughts are with all those affected, in particular our chair, Jonathan Bloomer, and his wife Judy, who are among the missing, and with their family as they await further news from this terrible situation."

Judy Bloomer

Bloomer, 71, is registered as a former director of the property developer Change Real Estate. She also served a seven-year stint as director of the Eve Appeal, a gynaecological cancer research charity. In a statement the charity said she had been a trustee and committee member for 20 years. Its chief executive, Athena Lamnisos, said: "Everyone at the charity is deeply shocked to hear the news that our very dear friend Judy is amongst the missing. Our thoughts are with Judy and Jonathan's family, and all those who are still waiting for news after this tragic event."

Chris Morvillo

Morvillo, 59, is a partner at top law firm Clifford Chance, and was one of the key lawyers who helped Lynch fight his criminal trial in the US. Morvillo has extensive experience representing corporate and individual clients in white-collar government investigations and regulatory and civil proceedings.

From 1999 to 2005, he served as an assistant US attorney for the Southern District of New York. He also assisted in the criminal investigation arising out of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks.

Morvillo, along with Brian Heberlig, a partner at the law firm Steptoe, served as co-counsel for Lynch in his US criminal trial and both were delighted in June when Lynch was acquitted of securities and wire fraud based on the claims that he falsely inflated revenues at Autonomy.

Neda Nassiri

The law firm Clifford Chance confirmed that Neda Nassiri, 57, the wife of Morvillo, is among those missing. In a statement its spokesperson said: "We are in shock and deeply saddened by this tragic incident. Our thoughts are with our partner, Christopher Morvillo, and his wife, Neda, who are among the missing."

"Our utmost priority is providing support to the family as well as our colleague Ayla Ronald, who together with her partner thankfully survived the incident."

Nassiri runs an eponymous luxury jewellery business.

Home Office to recruit 100 specialists to target Channel people-smuggling gangs

Rajeev Syal
Home affairs editor

The home secretary has announced plans to recruit 100 investigators and intelligence officers to target people-smuggling gangs across the Channel as part of measures to clamp down on illegal migration.

Yvette Cooper said that the National Crime Agency will find specialists to dismantle and disrupt organised immigration crime networks that exploit asylum seekers, as figures showed that more than 200 people came to the UK via small boats on Monday, taking the total for the year to just under 20,000.

The plans have been announced after immigration was forced to the top of the political agenda by this summer's riots.

Senior Labour figures remain aware that failing to get to grips with immigration in general, and small boats in particular, will be exploited by opponents on the right such as Nigel Farage and his Reform UK party.

Cooper said she plans to achieve the highest rate of deportations since 2018 for failed asylum seekers, and said the Home Office will launch a new intelligence-driven illegal working programme to target employers who hire people with no right to be in the UK.

So far there have been nine returns

flights in the past six weeks, including the largest ever chartered return flight, the Home Office said.

Staff are being redeployed to increase removal of failed asylum seekers, which had dropped by 40% since 2010, the Home Office said. Three hundred caseworkers have been reassigned to enforced and voluntary returns, it added.

The strategy is being overseen by Bas Javid, the Home Office's director general for immigration enforcement and the brother of the former Tory chancellor Sajid Javid.

The NCA is leading around 70 investigations into major people-smuggling and trafficking groups, the Home Office said.

Cooper said: "Our new Border Security Command is already gearing up, with new staff being urgently recruited and additional staff already stationed across Europe. They will work with European enforcement agencies to find every route in to smashing the criminal smuggling gangs organising dangerous boat crossings. By increasing enforcement capabilities and returns, we will establish a system that is better controlled and managed, in place of the chaos that has blighted the system for far too long."

More than half of the passengers travelling to the UK on small boats have come from countries so unstable there is no chance they can be

returned. They include Afghanistan, Iran, Eritrea, Syria, Iraq and Sudan. Almost all come from states with which the UK has no agreement to return those not granted asylum.

The Refugee Council has said that 36,000 asylum seekers are still living in unsuitable hotel rooms, at a cost of £5.3m each day.

On Monday, 206 migrants crossed in three boats. The latest figures take the provisional total for the year so far to 19,294.

The previous Conservative government spent around £700m on its flagship Rwanda scheme before the general election this year, according to Labour ministers' figures. Just four people were voluntarily sent to Rwanda, and Keir Starmer declared the scheme "dead and buried" within two days of becoming prime minister.

The NCA's director general of operations, Rob Jones, said: "Tackling organised immigration crime remains a key priority for the NCA, and we are dedicating more effort and resource than ever before."



Travellers to EU will have to pay £6 visa-waiver charge from May

Jack Simpson

UK citizens travelling to the European Union next summer will have to pay a €7 (£6) visa-waiver charge after the EU revealed its timeline for the introduction of new border checks and entry requirements for some visitors.

Ylva Johansson, the EU home affairs commissioner, confirmed that the European travel information and authorisation system (Etias), which will require UK citizens and those from other visa-exempt countries such as the US, Australia and Canada

to apply for a waiver before entering the bloc, was now expected to come into force by May 2025.

The scheme will require non-EU citizens to apply for the visa waiver before entering the Schengen area, which includes 27 EU member states, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. It will be valid for three years or until a passport expires.

The EU has also confirmed that its long-delayed entry-exit system (EES) for travellers to Schengen countries would launch on 10 November. The system will require travellers to provide biometric information, such as fingerprints and facial scans, at the

border. The introduction will also see new checks in the UK for those travelling to the EU through the Port of Dover, on LeShuttle from Folkestone and on Eurostar from London.

Speaking to staff involved in the rollout of the system this week, Johansson said: "After intense dialogues with member states, with you, with the different stakeholders, I have decided that the EES will enter into operations on 10 November."

Johansson's comments, which were reported in the Times, also confirmed that this would be followed six months later by the introduction of the Etias scheme.

This means adults might have to start applying for a visa waiver by May, which could affect travel during the half-term holidays.

Travellers under 18 or over 70 will be exempt from the charge, while

▲ A beach in Moterosso al Mare, Italy. UK citizens going to Schengen countries will face new border checks
PHOTOGRAPH: MARCO BERTORELLO/AFP/GETTY

people travelling to Ireland or Cyprus will not need the visa waiver as they are outside the Schengen area.

The visa waiver will require UK citizens to apply for an online permit and submit personal information such as address, employment details and any criminal convictions, as well as contact information in the destination country. Most applicants will be approved in minutes, but some decisions may take 48 to 72 hours.

The EU has said it will run a six-month transitional period, in which travellers will be expected to apply for the waiver but will not automatically be refused entry if they do not have it but fulfil other conditions.

Somerset House plans 'phased reopening' after roof blaze

PA Media

Somerset House will begin a "phased reopening" this weekend after a fire damaged the roof of the arts venue last Saturday.

About 125 firefighters and 20 engines had helped to tackle the blaze in central London, the London fire brigade said. There were no reported injuries.

Somerset House said in a statement yesterday that the reopening would begin with events including a fashion exhibition and an open-air ball on Saturday.

A celebration of breakdancing and "a day dedicated to South Asian creativity" were among the events called off last weekend as a result of the fire.

The statement read: "Saturday's fire was successfully contained to one part of the building. London fire brigade's operation onsite has ended and its investigation will continue."

"We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the individual firefighters, the emergency services and our staff for ensuring everyone's safety and preventing much greater destruction."

The Courtauld Gallery, home to priceless artwork including Van Gogh's 1889 self-portrait with a bandaged ear and paintings by Monet and Cezanne, was unaffected by the blaze and reopened to the public on Sunday.

The Somerset House Trust director, Jonathan Reekie, said the fire broke out in the west wing of the building, mainly comprised of offices and back-of-house facilities, and there were no artworks in the area.

The arts and events venue is also home to a number of artists, makers and creative businesses who use the complex's workspaces and studios.



Do not adjust your set

Artist Yinka Ilori's installation, *Good Things Come To Those Who Wait*, in Piccadilly Circus, London. It is the first time that 'Eros' has been decorated with public artwork.

PHOTOGRAPH: GUY BELL/SHUTTERSTOCK



Low English and maths GCSE pass rates 'a national scandal'

Richard Adams
Education editor

The government should address the "national scandal" of teenagers leaving school without GCSE passes in English and maths despite multiple retakes, a social mobility expert has said.

Ahead of the publishing of this summer's GCSE results tomorrow, Lee Elliot-Major, a professor of social mobility at the University of Exeter, said his research suggested too many young people who lacked the qualifications had lower chances of future success and an increased risk of poor mental and physical health.

"It's a national scandal that every year a fifth of teenagers fail

to master the basic GCSE grades in English and maths needed to function and flourish in life," Elliot-Major said. "Our research reveals the dire individual consequences of this academic failure.

"Without basic grades in English and maths, the odds of success are stacked against you. It doesn't just impact on your academic prospects but has wider life consequences for health and criminality," he added.

Students in England who fail to gain at least a passing grade 4 in maths or English GCSEs are required to be reexamined in the subjects while they remain in education, but pass rates remain low among those resitting their exams.

Last year just 16% of students resitting GCSE maths in England passed

with at least a grade 4, while 26% did the same in GCSE English.

"We also need to review our national resits policy to identify best practice so more students are able to secure their grades second time round," Elliot-Major said.

In a new working paper, academics from Exeter and University College

'Without basic grades in English and maths, the odds are stacked against you'

Lee Elliot-Major
Social mobility expert

London tracked 11,500 students in England who first sat GCSEs in 2016-17. It found that those who failed were more likely to have longstanding illnesses and behavioural problems.

"We need an urgent review of why so many pupils end up without basic grades after a decade of schooling, assessing how we can better diagnose and help four and five-year-old children falling behind," said Elliot-Major.

Meanwhile, a survey published by the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) found more than three-quarters of teachers saw students with mental health issues relating to GCSE anxiety in the past academic year.

Pepe Di'lasio, the ASCL's general secretary, said reforms to the content and structure of GCSEs since 2015 had made the exams more challenging.

The survey also found that 58% of teachers said that parents had contacted their school due to worries about how their child was coping with exam pressure, while 65% said they knew of students not attending school due to exam anxiety.

Just Eat McDonald's burger advert on Facebook broke junk food code

Jane Croft

An advert for the takeaway delivery service Just Eat that featured a McDonald's burger has been banned for not taking sufficient care to ensure that it was not aimed at children under 16.

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) ruled that the paid-for

Facebook advert must not appear again in its current form after it upheld a complaint made by Bite Back 2030, a youth activist movement challenging junk food.

Bite Back 2030 challenged whether the advert was for a product that was high in fat, salt or sugar (HFSS) and was directed at children through the selection of media or context in which it appeared.

The advert, seen on 15 December

2023, featured text that stated: "Fancy a McMuffin in the morning? McNuggets for lunch? Or a big night in with a Big Mac? Get them delivered right here." Below was a changing image of McNuggets that was replaced by the Just Eat and McDonald's logos.

Just Eat had argued that the targeting of the ad was responsible: it said it had aimed the promotion at individuals aged over 18 using Meta's age-targeting tools. It argued that if the complainant had a Facebook account registered with an age under 18, they would not have been able to see the ad at that time.

The ASA said it acknowledged that age-based targeting was applied to

the ad to exclude those registered as under 18 on Facebook from seeing it. However, interest-based targeting factors had not been used to exclude groups of people more likely to be under 16 from the target audience, it said. "We concluded Just Eat had not taken sufficient care to ensure the ad, which promoted several HFSS products, was not directed at individuals aged under 16 years. The ad therefore breached the code," the ASA said.

Just Eat said: "Although we are disappointed by this outcome, Just Eat acknowledges the ASA's concerns. We are now reviewing our processes to ensure future promotions reach only the intended audience."

Scotland's peak rail fares return after flat rate trial fails to add passengers

Severin Carrell
Scotland editor

Scottish ministers will reintroduce peak rail fares across the country after an experiment with flat rate fares failed to significantly increase passenger numbers.

Trade unions and opposition parties condemned the decision, and accused the Scottish government of presiding over a shambolic rail service and of failing to adequately tackle the climate crisis.

The year-long pilot scheme to abolish peak fares was introduced as part of the Scottish National party's power-sharing deal with the Scottish Greens. It was designed to encourage people to cut their car usage and mitigate soaring living costs.

Data from the government agency Transport Scotland shows that vehicle ownership hit a record 3.09m in 2022, of which 82% were cars. Data also showed 75% of Scottish households had access to one or more cars.

Earlier this year the UK Committee on Climate Change, an official advisory body, said Scotland's climate targets were "no longer credible", in part because ministers had failed to prove how they would cut car kilometres by 20% by 2030.

Fiona Hyslop, the Scottish transport secretary, revealed yesterday that the pilot had increased rail usage by only 6.8%, at a cost of £40m, with better-off passengers and frequent train users the main beneficiaries.

She said passenger numbers needed to grow by at least 10% to make it self-financing, and the additional subsidy was currently unaffordable given the intense financial pressures facing ministers.

As a result, peak fares will be reintroduced across all ScotRail services from 27 September.

Hyslop said: "The pilot will have been welcome in saving many passengers hundreds and in some cases thousands of pounds during the cost of living crisis but this level of subsidy cannot continue in the current financial climate on that measure alone."

Alex Rowley, Scottish Labour's transport spokesperson, said cuts to rail services and changes to timetables due to a shortage of drivers had left ScotRail services in chaos, and that was partly to blame for the low take-up of flat rate fares.



▲ A Scotrail service on Glenfinnan viaduct, west of Fort William



▲ Ministers will recall campaigns such as that by Marcus Rashford, above, on school-holiday meals

MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: ANTONIO OLMOS/GUARDIAN



Half a million children 'will face holiday hunger' if £1bn local crisis fund is ditched

Patrick Butler
Social policy editor

More than half a million children will go hungry during school holidays from the October half-term if the government fails to renew a £1bn local welfare crisis fund due to end in six weeks' time, charities have warned.

English councils last year spent £370m from their Household Support Fund (HSF) allocations on holiday food vouchers for pupils on free school meals (FSM) – but over a quarter of authorities say this support could disappear if the fund is ditched.

Discontinuing the HSF will also devastate an already threadbare crisis safety net which supports tens of

thousands of families at risk of destitution with cash, food parcels, fuel vouchers, clothing, beds, cookers and other essential items.

"If HSF ends, with no long-term strategy to replace it, it will instantly plunge millions into more financial turmoil. The effects of poverty, deprivation and even malnutrition will be exacerbated and the additional costs to public services will be huge," a report by the charity End Furniture Poverty report concludes.

Its report, based on near 100% freedom of information returns from councils, shows England's local crisis support safety net, which has existed in various forms since the 1930s, is fragmented, and in many areas, nonexistent.

Council-run local crisis support would disappear from a nearly a third of English local authority areas covering 18 million people, including Birmingham, Bradford, Nottingham, Westminster, Croydon, Hampshire, Slough, and Stoke-on-Trent.

Its removal would also push scores of local food banks to the brink of insolvency, with many having become reliant on HSF cash grants to meet the explosion in demand for charity food as a result of Covid and the cost of living crisis.

The government, which last week set out the terms of reference for its long-term plan to "reduce and alleviate child poverty", is under pressure to urgently decide the future of the HSF. Funding for the scheme runs out

on 30 September, a month before the autumn statement.

The chancellor, Rachel Reeves, last month identified the £500m HSF budget for the first six months of this year as one of a number of "unfunded" commitments made by the previous government – part of a £22bn spending shortfall – which would come under Treasury scrutiny.

Campaigners believe ministers will be wary of provoking a public backlash if school holiday food vouchers disappeared in many areas of England. A popular campaign led by footballer Marcus Rashford in 2020 twice forced then prime minister Boris Johnson to U-turn on plans to scrap holiday free school meals support.

The End Furniture Poverty report reveals the extent to which local authorities have come to rely on the HSF to tackle holiday hunger in the past three years. Last year 44% of the entire budget was used to fund holiday food vouchers, the biggest single line of expenditure.

Twenty-two councils have said they will discontinue the vouchers if the HSF is ditched, with a further 20 saying they were undecided. The report says 561,000 children who would currently qualify for FSM vouchers will not be able to access them if the fund is discontinued.

"The alternative to providing [holiday] vouchers is that children will go hungry until the welfare state is able to adequately cover need," the report says. "It will reduce education opportunities and the ability of the poorest children to reach their potential."

The HSF was introduced by the last government in 2021 in an attempt to mitigate the impact of its decision to reverse the £20 pandemic uplift to universal credit. The last government renewed the fund in March with just six months of funding.

Last year, on top of those families receiving HSF-funded school holiday food vouchers, more than 1.2m households in England accessed other forms of HSF support.

The Local Government Association said last week that nearly two-thirds (60%) of English councils would not be able to provide additional funding for local welfare crisis schemes if the HSF was discontinued, despite an expected surge in demand over the coming months as a result of high fuel and food bills.

According to End Furniture Poverty, the English local welfare crisis system is strikingly less generous than the schemes run by the Welsh and Scottish governments. Local welfare spending per head in England was £1.37 in 2023-24, compared with £10.47 in Wales and £9.16 in Scotland.

Campaigners are urging the HSF to be maintained for at least six months. A government spokesperson said: "This government will tackle the scar of poverty by making sure work pays and improving support to help people into good work. More details on the Household Support Fund will be set out in due course."

Analysis
Patrick Butler

England's poorest families rely on HSF grants – and they face a winter of misery without them

Without the household support fund (HSF), Hereford food bank would be struggling to stay afloat. "We're seeing fewer cash and food donations and demand for food parcels is soaring – so it's been a saviour

for us," says the food bank's manager, Helen Parker. Last year it received an £84,000 HSF grant from Herefordshire county council. This helped it distribute 2,300 food parcels to nearly 5,000 individuals (including 1,700 children) over 12 months, equivalent to more than 100,000 meals.

The funding accounted for about

a quarter of its total income as a charity. "Without HSF, we'd have been operating at a loss," says Parker. "It's been a godsend."

Hereford food bank is just one of hundreds of voluntary organisations involved in grassroots welfare crisis schemes in England who are nervously looking at the possible discontinuation of the government-funded HSF in just over six weeks' time.

The HSF, while derided by critics as a "sticking plaster" response to deepening poverty, has been a lifeline for grassroots charities working on the frontline. Last year, local groups in England received about £126m in HSF grants.

The HSF was introduced by the Conservative government in 2021 as a sop to backbench rebels worried that cutting the £20-a-week Covid uplift to universal credit would cause an explosion in poverty. Worth £842m in England last year, it has become a kind of

pop-up annual workaround for a creaking social security system.

Councils have used it to fund holiday food voucher and activity schemes for children on free school meals, and help households with basic costs, either directly or through local charity services.

The HSF has also provided cover for the destruction of England's welfare safety net since the coalition government abolished the discretionary social fund in 2013, providing families in crisis with cash loans and emergency grants for cookers, beds and fridges.

Had the 2010-11 English social fund budget continued to rise in line with inflation, it would have been £409m last year, according to the charity End Furniture Poverty (EFP). Instead, spending was just £79m – the consequence of crisis support being devolved to cash-strapped councils.

About a third of English local authorities, covering 18 million

people, have already abolished local welfare schemes. Many more are now dependent on HSF for more than 50% of their local welfare spending. If the HSF is withdrawn, there will "large parts of England with no form of crisis support", says EFP.

Campaigners want an urgent overhaul of local welfare in England, replacing the current postcode lottery of schemes with a statutory local authority service funded to reflect rising demand for crisis help. They say the HSF should stay for at least six more months to enable this redesign.

The HSF is due to run out on 30 September, giving the Labour government very little time to decide whether it will relax its famously rigid budgetary discipline and keep it going. If it doesn't, say campaigners, it risks a school holiday hunger crisis and another winter of misery for England's poorest families.

Disney drops waiver defence over woman's death at resort

Anna Betts
New York

Disney has dropped a controversial legal claim that the terms and conditions a widower agreed when signing up for the Disney+ streaming service protect it from a wrongful death lawsuit he brought over his wife's death after she ate at a resort restaurant.

On Monday night, Josh D'Amaro, the chair of Disney Experiences, released a statement announcing that Disney had decided to have the matter proceed in court, rather than through arbitration, as the company had been fighting for just last week.

"At Disney, we strive to put humanity above all other considerations," D'Amaro said. "With such unique circumstances as the ones in this case, we believe this situation warrants a sensitive approach to expedite

a resolution for the family who have experienced such a painful loss. As such, we've decided to waive our right to arbitration and have the matter proceed in court."

Disney made headlines last week after its lawyers asked a judge in Florida to dismiss the wrongful death lawsuit and settle any disputes with the company out of court via arbitration.

The company's lawyers argued the widower had agreed to Disney's terms of use - which state that users agree to settle any disputes with the company out of court via arbitration - when he signed up for a one-month free trial of Disney+ in 2019, and again in 2023, when he purchased the Disney theme park tickets using his Disney+ account.

In court documents, attorneys for Disney argued that the terms of use included an arbitration clause that



▲ The case concerns a restaurant meal at Walt Disney World, Florida

applied to "all disputes" including those involving "The Walt Disney Company or its affiliates" and that Walt Disney Parks and Resorts was an affiliate of the Walt Disney Company.

Daniel Zuniga, a partner at Personal Injury of Florida law firm, described the argument as "unconscionable". "The consequences of such a ruling or such a holding could be catastrophic for the average person," he told the

Guardian when the suit was disclosed. "Big conglomerates just keep getting bigger and bigger, so how far up the chain can it go?"

Jeffrey Piccolo filed the wrongful death lawsuit against Walt Disney World and Resorts and a restaurant at the resort earlier this year after his wife, Dr Kanokporn Tangsuan, died in October 2023 after eating at the Raglan Road Irish Pub at the resort near Orlando, Florida.

In the lawsuit, Piccolo alleges that his wife's death was a result of suffering an allergic reaction, which is supported by the report of a medical examiner who determined that her cause of death was anaphylaxis due to elevated levels of dairy and nut in her system.

Piccolo says that while they were dining at the resort restaurant he and his wife both questioned the waiter multiple times, as Tangsuan had a severe allergy to dairy and nuts, and that the waiter assured them that the order would be allergen-free.

The lawsuit argues that the wait staff was negligent and seeks damages exceeding \$50,000 (£38,400) from Disney.

The litigation remains ongoing and a hearing is scheduled for 2 October.

Environment Agency mulls legal action over Exmouth sewage spill

Helena Horton
Environment reporter

The Environment Agency is considering legal action against South West Water after the company spilled sewage into the sea at a Devon beach.

Swimmers were told to stay out of the sea at Exmouth beach after a sewer burst on private land next to the Maer Lane wastewater treatment works on Thursday.

The EA said: "As regulator, we are keeping pressure on the water company to do all it can to prevent pollution from damaging bathing water quality."

"We continue to monitor the site closely and encourage the public to check Swimfo for the latest status of bathing water quality before swimming. Given the seriousness of the incident, the Environment Agency is considering what legal approach to take for these pollutions on Exmouth beach."

Clarissa Newell, the regulatory manager at the EA, told BBC Radio Devon: "We are investigating and considering all enforcement options ... that could be a warning, it could be the water company promises to invest in the environment they damaged or the infrastructure that caused that damage, or we go to prosecution."

A spokesperson for SWW said it had temporarily fixed the broken sewer pipe, adding: "We always work with all of our regulators, including the Environment Agency, and are continuing to keep them fully updated. We continue to work around the clock to complete this essential work. We would like to thank residents and visitors for their patience, and we are sorry for the disruption caused throughout this event."

The company has been using tankers to transfer sewage flowing into the treatment works to reduce the spill while repairs are underway.

There have been concerns about impacts on local tourism, with reports the beach was much quieter than usual over the weekend. Yellow warning signs were erected and lifeguards used loudspeakers to warn people against going in the water.

David Reed, the Conservative MP for Exmouth and Exeter East, said: "To see Exmouth beach with so few people enjoying it on a beautiful August day is extremely depressing."

"This current event with South West Water needs to end asap. I've been clear with senior representatives from SWW that it's their duty to provide accurate and timely updates to let locals and tourists alike know how repairs are progressing."

Earlier this summer, businesses in the South West reported tourism was down after the parasitic disease cryptosporidium was found in South West Water's supply.



Rocket testing 'will return' after explosion at Shetland spaceport

Nadeem Badshah

A rocket company has vowed to return to regular operations "as soon as possible" after an explosion during a test at the UK's new spaceport in Shetland.

The test was carried out by Rocket Factory Augsburg (RFA) which hopes to make the first UK vertical rocket launch into orbit. Monday's nine-engine test, at the SaxaVord

Spaceport on the island of Unst, was one of the trials before launch.

RFA said an "anomaly" had led to "the loss of the stage" but there were no injuries: "The launch pad has been saved and is secured, the situation is under control, and any immediate danger has been mitigated."

RFA, based in Augsburg, Germany, said it was working with the spaceport and authorities to find the cause of the failure. A spokesperson said: "We develop iteratively with an emphasis on real testing. This is part

of our philosophy and we were aware of the higher risks attached to this approach. Our goal is to return to regular operations as soon as possible."

It comes three months after the site's first rocket test was carried out and declared a success. On that occasion, RFA fired the engines for eight seconds before shutting down.

A SaxaVord spokesperson said: "This was a test, and test campaigns are designed to identify issues prior to the next stage. We will work with RFA to understand and learn from the causes and support them as they move forward to the next phase of their preparations."

Unst, which has about 650 inhabitants, is at the northernmost tip of the British Isles. Its location means

▲ A sequence shows the explosion during the engine test at SaxaVord Spaceport in Shetland IMAGES: BBC

that rockets lifting off from the site do not need to pass over populated areas, unlike those launched from other sites, which have to perform dog-leg manoeuvres, limiting the weight of the payload they can carry.

SaxaVord received its spaceport and range licences from the Civil Aviation Authority in December 2023 and April 2024. It will allow up to 30 satellites and other payloads to be launched into commercially valuable polar, sun-synchronous orbits, which are in high demand from satellite operators for communications and Earth observation.

Probation officers warn of shortages ahead of early release scheme

Rajeev Syal

Home affairs editor

Ministers will struggle to prepare for next month's early release of thousands of prisoners, a union warned yesterday, after the latest figures showed a drop in the number of probation officers.

Ministry of Justice data showed there were 178 fewer probation officers over the last quarter, as the service gets ready to monitor another 5,500 prisoners released over the next year despite deepening concerns over increased workloads for staff.

Up to 2,000 prisoners are expected to be freed in the second week of September as part of a scheme called SDS40 that will allow many prisoners to walk free after serving 40% of their sentences.

A second tranche of up to 1,700 prisoners, all jailed for more than five years, are expected to be freed in late October after the law was changed by the lord chancellor, Shabana Mahmood, to relieve pressure on overcrowded prisons.

A senior official from Napo, the probation officers' union, said its members were trying to prepare for the early release scheme, but the government was unable to maintain staffing levels, let alone recruit more.

"At a time when probation is under even more pressure from workloads in preparation for the SDS40 early release scheme, we now see a drop in staffing numbers," said Tania Bassett, a Napo national officer.

"[HM Prison and Probation Service] needs to understand why people are leaving, and this will include pay. The crisis in our justice system is a result of years of cuts and the government must take urgent action to invest in the whole system."

Ministry of Justice figures showed there were 5,160 full-time band 4 probation officers in post in June, which is a decrease of 178 compared with March.

Martin Jones, the chief inspector of probation in England and Wales, told the Guardian in July that the current probation model was "not

sustainable" and suggested ministers should free up capacity by no longer asking probation officers to monitor 40,000 people released from prison after short custodial sentences for crimes such as shoplifting.

As part of an overview of the probation system, which manages more than 240,000 offenders a year, Jones said each of the service's 12 regions in England and Wales were already struggling to cope with the number of cases.

More than 95% of probation delivery units examined by the watchdog were falling below the standards set for good practice, he said.

The way that offenders are monitored in the community has come under intense scrutiny since the murder of Zara Aleena, a law graduate, in east London in 2022. Her killer, Jordan McSweeney, who had a long history of misogynistic and racially aggravated incidents, should have been seen by probation officers as a high-risk offender and recalled to prison after missing appointments. Instead, he was incorrectly assessed as being of medium risk and remained free to attack Aleena.

That case followed the exposure of failings by the probation service before Damien Bendall murdered three children and his pregnant partner in Derbyshire in 2021.

On Monday, the government said it would launch Operation Early Dawn, a longstanding plan that means defendants who are waiting for a court appearance can be held in police cells for longer until prison space became available.

The emergency scheme has been announced as hundreds of rioters have been jailed in the wake of unrest this summer.

The director of public prosecutions has said the criminal justice system requires "considerable investment" as the jailed rioters continue to put pressure on overcrowded prisons.

In a piece for the Times, Stephen Parkinson defended the "brisk" nature of the disorder prosecutions, saying cases such as rape and domestic violence take longer to build and are more "complex".

A Ministry of Justice spokesperson said: "We inherited a prison system in crisis and have taken difficult but necessary action to make sure we can keep locking up dangerous criminals and protect the public, and since then the Probation Service has been planning for these releases."

They added: "Everyone released will be strictly monitored, face tough licence conditions like electronic tagging and curfews and could be recalled to prison if they breach licence conditions."



'It'll mean a lot' King visits Southport to meet those affected by attack

Hannah Al-Othman

King Charles was greeted by hundreds of people in Southport yesterday as he visited Merseyside to meet those affected by last month's knife attack.

Members of the crowd, some of whom had been waiting hours for the arrival of the king, cheered and applauded as he arrived at Southport town hall, while some waved union flags or shouted "God save the king".

The monarch stepped out of his car just after 1.30pm before stopping to read some of the hundreds of tributes which lay among flowers, balloons, and cuddly toys left on the fountain outside of the building in memory of

Bebe King, six, Elsie Dot Stancombe, seven, and Alice Dasilva Aguiar, nine, who all died in the attack.

The king stopped to talk and shake hands with several members of the public, some of whom were moved to tears. Speaking to one woman, he said: "Look at all the flowers," while Southport resident Linsey Hislop, 43, asked him about his health and how he was feeling after his cancer treatment. "I'm not too bad," he replied.

Hislop, a foster carer, said: "I love the royal family. My son is a police officer who worked during the riots so it's really good of the king to come."

Louise Watson, 44, who works at Southport college, had come to see the king with her two sons and two nieces. Running through their names,

she laughed, saying: "You're going to love this, we've got Charles, Megan and Harry ... it wasn't intentional!"

She added: "It's lovely, it's great for the kids to see it. I think it's really nice, I think it's showing respect for the families that have been affected."

"I think it'll mean a lot to the town and particularly for any families that have been involved."

King Charles "waved straight at" her other niece, Eleanor, 10, who said: "It was really nice to see the king, how he cares." Watson's son, Charles, 17, added: "It's nice that he's come to show his respect and condolences for what's happened, it's a bit of a motivator, a pick-up for Southport."

"It's a wonderful thing that he's doing, to come," Gina Wallwork, 77, said. "I do think it'll mean a lot to everyone in the town, it was right for him to come." She added that everyone had been feeling "just really sad" since last month's attack.

Alan Beddow, 86, another spectator, said: "I think it's a good gesture, a really nice gesture. I think especially because Kate's ill, and he's ill, it's amazing really." Beddow, a retired

2,000

Number of prisoners expected to be released early in September as part of the government's SDS40 scheme

5,160

The number of full-time band 4 probation officers in post in June, a decrease of 178 since March



▲ King Charles with members of the public at Southport town hall. Some of the crowd had been waiting for hours and the king was cheered

and applauded as he arrived. He stopped to read some of the floral tributes left outside the building

PHOTOGRAPH: OWEN HUMPHREYS/PA



insurance broker, added: "The last time I came out to see a royal was when Princess Di opened Tesco."

Charles was greeted by Dr Ruth Hussey, the vice lord lieutenant of Merseyside, and the councillor June Burns, who is mayor of Sefton, and then went inside the town hall to meet some of the children who

survived the attack, their families and the police team working with them.

After spending about an hour in the building, he left to more cheers. The king is due to meet the three bereaved families in London today.

The king then met local politicians at Southport community fire station, as well as representatives from Merseyside's police and emergency services, and community groups, including faith leaders.

Patrick Hurley, MP for Sefton, which includes Southport, said: "The town's emotions were raging and they still are very raw and he was very empathetic. He was very keen to express his sympathy and empathy. Very keen to make sure the people of Southport know that the country's heart goes out to the people here."

Axel Rudakubana, 18, has been charged with murder in relation to the attack. He has also been charged with the attempted murder of Leanne Lucas, a yoga class instructor, John Hayes, a businessman, and eight children. He will next appear at Liverpool crown court on 25 October for a pre-trial preparation hearing.

Disorder Factory worker jailed for role in riot at hotel

Hannah Al-Othman

A man who shouted abuse at police guarding a hotel housing asylum seekers and celebrated as missiles were thrown at officers has been jailed for three years and four months, as more people were sentenced yesterday for their part in the riots.

Sheffield crown court heard that Lee Crisp, a 42-year-old factory worker from Barnsley, was part of a group that gathered outside the Holiday Inn Express at Manvers in Wath-upon-Dearne, near Rotherham.

The Recorder of Sheffield, Judge Jeremy Richardson KC, said the "high octane" abuse dished out by Crisp encouraged the crowd, adding: "You were leading the way in all of this, in four separate incidents."

Several other people alleged to have been involved have been remanded in custody charged with offences linked to the disorder.

Jake Turton, 38, is due to face trial in December. Turton, of Darfield, Barnsley, is accused of driving a pickup truck to rioting outside the hotel. He is alleged to have driven the Ford Ranger truck to the Holiday Inn Express on 4 August, from which protesters took wood and other debris to use as weapons against the police.

Turton did not enter a plea to the charges of violent disorder, taking a vehicle without consent and having no insurance.

He was remanded in custody and a trial date was set for 16 December.

In Staffordshire, David Jordan was jailed for 28 months after

being captured on video outside the Holiday Inn Express in Tamworth throwing something - which he claims was an apple core - in the direction of the hotel as he shouted expletives and racist slurs.

The father-of-four, of Tamworth Road in Tamworth, also messaged a contact on Facebook on 5 August asking them to spread the word that some migrants had been moved to a different hotel.

Jordan pleaded guilty to violent disorder at Stafford crown court. Sentencing him, Judge John Edwards said: "You rightly hung your head in shame as we watched the video. I have looked with care at the footage, you are front and centre of this baying mob for an hour and a half."

At Bristol crown court, a single father who took part in violent clashes with the police was jailed for two and a half years.

Craig Timbrell, 38, threw concrete blocks, bricks and bottles at the police near to the Mercure Hotel, used to house asylum seekers, in the Redcliffe area of the city on 3 August.

Méabh McGee, prosecuting, said: "The situation escalated to the point where there was significant disorder and violence used towards officers, property and opposing groups."

Also in Bristol, Bradley McCarthy, 34, was jailed for 20 months after being caught on video "threatening" opponents and shouting at the police, including at a police dog.

In London, Alfie Arrowsmith, 28, who yelled "come on" and "let's have it" at police during unrest in Whitehall on 31 July, was sentenced to 16 months' imprisonment.

The roofer, who had been working as a traffic manager at the Ritz Hotel on the day of the protest, had previously pleaded guilty to one charge of violent disorder. He wept in the dock as the footage of him repeatedly confronting police was played to Inner London crown court.

Bradley Halton, 28, of Hounslow, west London, was also sentenced to 16 months in prison after pleading guilty to violent disorder.

The tree surgeon was filmed chanting "Who the fuck is Allah" and shouting racist remarks at police officers. Judge Vanessa Baraitser described the defendant's comments as "racist" and "profoundly offensive".

She told him: "Those who engage in such violence can expect to receive serious sentences to punish and deter people from taking part in similar behaviour."

In Northern Ireland, Lennon Ashwood, 22, of Tavanagh Street in Belfast, was charged with 28 offences, including riot, arson attacks, and assaulting a police officer.

Ashwood has been charged with four counts of riot on four occasions: 15 and 16 July, as well as 3 and 5 August. Other charges include two counts of throwing petrol bombs; one charge of causing an explosion likely to endanger life or cause serious injury; as well as the attempted grievous bodily harm of a PSNI constable, and several counts of arson.

Disorder flared in the Sandy Row area of Belfast on 3 August, when businesses, owned by members of ethnic minority communities were set alight, and cars were torched.

Ashwood is next due to appear in court on 17 September.



▲ David Jordan pleaded guilty to violent disorder at Stafford crown court and was jailed for 28 months



▲ Lee Crisp, left, was jailed for three years and four months, while Bradley McCarthy, right, was sentenced to 20 months in prison

Theatre review

Homage to Hitchcock has run out of steam

The 39 Steps

Trafalgar theatre, London

★★★★☆

Chris Wiegand

“Think of the strain involved!” marvels the compere introducing Mr Memory at the start of Alfred Hitchcock’s 1935 film of John Buchan’s novel. Mr Memory logs away 50 new facts each day but the industrious cast of four for Patrick Barlow’s adaptation have managed to learn 130 parts between them. What I remember most about the hit comedy’s original West End transfer in 2006 is a whirl of ingenious stagecraft. This revival, at Trafalgar theatre after a tour,

proves disappointingly forgettable. Too often you sense the wheels turning instead of losing yourself in the fun. The play should be equal parts thriller, comedy and romance – an ambitious mix – but it doesn’t satisfy on any of those levels. Barlow adds a prelude with spiffy Richard Hannay in an armchair, recalling how he took himself off to the theatre, where Mr Memory does his act and the plot whirs into gear. There is the occasional suggestion that Hannay is directing, or at least has co-written, this adventure himself. The show revels in its own artifice with a flapped coat-tail suggesting a storm and a few chairs rearranged to form a car. But you do not get the extra, dizzying layers that come with the hammy am-dram comedy The Play That Goes Wrong, where each performer is portraying both an actor and a character, and the joy is in watching them flit from one to the other as



even the set turns against them. By contrast, the stakes in The 39 Steps often seem surprisingly low. Peter McKintosh’s set design reminds us we are in a theatre, with an exposed brick back wall and a prominent fire bucket, although the Palladium climax would come alive if the auditorium was also used. A loose picture frame, a steering wheel and a lamp-post are all picked up to move scenes along as Hannay finds himself an innocent man on the run, embroiled in espionage. His rail journey is cleverly conveyed with gusts of smoke, a miniature train and artfully arranged luggage

▲ The set evokes a theatre setting while the cast of four juggle 130 roles between them PHOTOGRAPH: MARK SENIOR

The play should be equal parts thriller, comedy and romance – an ambitious mix – but it doesn’t satisfy on any of those levels

although the homage to one of Hitchcock’s masterstrokes – blending a cleaner’s scream with a train whistle – is underpowered. The film’s noises have a jolting effect – gunshots, alarms, squeaks, even barking dogs – but Mic Pool’s sound design is not given enough emphasis to match Ian Scott’s accomplished lighting. Shadow puppetry sweetly evokes a chase through forests but the film’s sheep scene – surely crying out for a comic treatment – falls flat. There are tributes to Hitchcock classics, with the Psycho shower standing in for a waterfall and Vertigo becoming a leaden one-liner. Pace is already a problem in the production (originally directed by Maria Aitken, with the tour directed by Nicola Samer) before an unnecessary interval. The villains’ machinations remain locked away in a comedy world, without gaining any modern resonance. In a show that needs more polished physical comedy, Eugene McCoy stands out for his vivid interpretations. Maddie Rice and Safeena Ladha juggle accents and, like Tom Byrne as Hannay, make a jolly stab at it but the result can sometimes feel less like a thrilling race against the clock and more of a garbled rush.

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'Out of this world'

Guide to modernist Manchester sets out to restore architects' vision and optimism

Mark Brown
North of England correspondent

As a pre-war building it must have blown people's minds," says Jack Hale, admiring the glassy magnificence of the Express Building in Manchester. "In the same period you were still getting stone classical buildings and then this appears."

His colleague Eddy Rhead agrees. "It must have been like a spaceship landing ... it would have been out of this world."

Hale and Rhead are founders of the Manchester-based Modernist Society, which, at the end of August, will branch out digitally with a free, grant-funded, mobile app that offers a guide through the city's 20th-century architecture. Soon they plan to expand the tours to Salford, Stockport and Trafford.

The Guardian toured modernist Manchester with Hale and Rhead and their passion for the buildings was obvious. The grade II*-listed

Daily Express building in Great Ancoats Street is one of three built by Owen Williams for the Daily Express, the others being in Glasgow and in Fleet Street, London. Williams was a pioneer of concrete and principal engineer for Wembley stadium. The stunning example in Manchester, which opened in 1939, is seen by many as his crowning achievement and tells a wider story about the city's newspaper history.

"Manchester once printed more newspapers than anywhere outside Chicago," said Rhead. "Papers from Manchester would go to the north of Scotland as well as Bristol and Birmingham. All the newspapers had big offices here."

The Manchester Guardian, now the Guardian, was in Cross Street and the Daily Mail was in a beautiful, now demolished, art deco rocket building in Deansgate.

"It has all the basic principles of early modernism," Hale said of the Daily Express's former home. "It's functional, it's using modern materials ... it is one of the purest early modern buildings in the city."

And after sympathetic refurbishment, the building still looks glorious, seemingly thriving as a co-working space renamed the Express Building. Which is more than can be said for the next building on the tour, the Co-operative Insurance Society (CIS) Tower in Miller Street, completed in 1962, once the tallest office building in the UK outside London but now abandoned.

The top floors were all Mad Men-style wood-panelled offices and there was art in abundance. The grand foyer has a granite floor, walls clad with Sicilian marble and a striking abstract mural. Yet today you can only just see the mural through the dirty windows.



▲ The Guardian's more traditional building in Cross Street in 1963

Conservatives in Canada delete video with clips from other countries

Leyland Cecco
Toronto

Canada's Conservative party has deleted a social media campaign video with a heavily nationalist message after much of the video featured scenes from other countries, including Ukrainian farmers, Slovenian homes, London's Richmond Park and a pair of Russian fighter jets.

The video, titled "Canada. Our Home", was posted to X, with various scenes overlaid by a speech from the party leader, Pierre Poilievre. The

Conservatives, who lead the governing Liberals in the polls, are preparing for what is expected to be a bitterly contested federal election.

Soon after the video was posted, viewers pointed out much of the footage depicted as "Canadian" was easily traced to places outside the country. A thread on X by the Calgary-based user @disorderedyyc compiled at least 13 inconsistencies, adding: "If you're making a video about the Canada 'we know and love', you should be using actual Canadian footage."

Among the gaffes: a "Canadian dad" driving through the suburbs was

actually stock footage from North Dakota in the United States; a clip of children attending class was shot in Serbia; and a university student "late for class" was filmed at a post-secondary institution in Ukraine.

A scene in which a child walks with her grandparents was shot in London's Richmond Park.

One of the final scenes, of a sunset overlaid with the words "We're Home", was shot in Venezuela.

The scene that has generated the most controversy involves a pair of fighter jets in the sky. "They're doing a training mission in the sky, getting

ready to defend our home and native land," Poilievre says in the video.

A spokesperson for Canada's defence minister said the two planes were Russian Su-17 and Su-27 jets.

"Shockingly, Mr Poilievre's dream for Canada includes Russian fighter jets flying over our glorious Prairies on a 'training mission'," Daniel Minden said in a statement.

The party deleted the video soon after the wave of criticism. A Conservative party spokeswoman, Sarah Fischer, confirmed it had been removed. "Mistakes happen, as you can see here," she said.



'Today there's a paucity of ambition whereas modernists really did think they were improving people's lives'

Eddy Rhead
Far right, with Jack Hale of the Modernist Society



▲ Manchester buildings in the guide, from top: the Mercure hotel, Piccadilly Plaza; the Express Building; New Century Hall

PHOTOGRAPHS: MARK WAUGH/GUARDIAN



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Swiftonomics

Seismic impact of European leg of the Eras tour

Rachel Hall

Taylor Swift's final night at Wembley has wrapped up the European leg of her Eras tour, already the highest grossing tour ever. As she prepares to jet off to Canada for the very last final shows, here's a look at the main things that happened.

Over 50 dates across Europe

The European tour kicked off in Paris on 9 May and wrapped up in London on 20 August with 49 dates in between in Sweden, Ireland, Portugal, Germany, Poland, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

Several European cities reported a sharp rise in demand for hotel and short-term rental accommodation over the summer after dates were announced. BBC Scotland revealed that the accommodation shortage was so severe that several homeless people had been sent via taxi to Aberdeen and Glasgow.

Some areas also increased transport links around the show, for example Irish Rail running additional late-night services to Cork and Limerick.

Seismic proportions

It's not all Tay-gating and friendship bracelets, Swiftonomics is serious business. The UK leg was predicted to boost the economy by £1bn as almost 1.2 million fans attended concerts in Edinburgh, Liverpool, Cardiff and London.

Each spent an estimated average of £848 on the overall experience of attending the concerts, sparking a short-term bump in inflation, according to Barclays. However some economists have expressed scepticism about the impact Swift's tour could really have on the economy, claiming the £1bn figure has been overhyped.

Swift's donations to food banks in the cities in which she toured helped one Cardiff food bank to buy a lorry full of supplies, while one Liverpool food bank said it would fund 12 months' worth of donations.

A team of geophysicists recorded ground seismic waves generated by fans dancing in Wembley Stadium over three nights, from 21 to 23 June, and found songs Love Story and Shake it Off generated shaking equivalent to an earthquake of magnitude 0.8.

▲ Taylor Swift during her Eras tour at Wembley; fans gather in Austria after concerts were cancelled, right

PHOTOGRAPHS: GARETH CATTERMOLLE/TAS24/GETTY IMAGES; ELISABETH MANDL/REUTERS

A tragic backdrop

On 29 July, shortly before Swift arrived in the UK, three little girls were killed in a horrifying attack at a Taylor Swift-themed dance class. Swift is understood to have personally reached out to the families of the three Southport stabbing victims: Bebe King, six, Alice Dasilva Aguire, nine, and Elsie Dot Stancombe, seven.

After the attack, which left 10 others injured, Swift released a statement saying that she was "completely in shock" and "at a complete loss for how to ever convey my sympathies to these families". Swift brought two young survivors backstage for a meet-and-greet at one of her Wembley Stadium shows. Photos posted on TikTok show Autumn and Hope Foster, who both attended the dance class, posing with Swift.

The highest-grossing tour ever

Swift's Eras Tour is on track to gross more than \$1bn (£770m) by the end of 2024, having already become the first tour to pass that figure last year and making her the first ever billionaire to make their earnings through music alone.

▼ Thousands of fans gathered to listen to the show from outside the venue in the Olympiapark in Munich

PHOTOGRAPH: AYHAN UYANIK/REUTERS



Pollstar, a trade publication that collects data on the live music industry, put the tour's gross earnings at just over \$1bn after the first 60 shows. This means she's selling an average of 72,000 tickets at \$239 each, and with the industry standard that artists receive about 85% of the ticket income, this suggests Swift earns around \$14.7m per show. Her gross takings have been estimated at over \$2bn, not including the cost of running the tour. Tour merch is selling at an average price of \$51 per item.

A foiled terrorist plot

The Vienna leg of Swift's blockbuster tour was cancelled

after three people were arrested over an apparent plot to launch an attack on a public event in the Austrian capital, understood to be Swift's show.

According to police, one of the suspects confessed to planning to "kill as many people as possible outside the concert venue". About 20,000 to 35,000 non-ticket holders were expected to gather outside the Ernst Happel stadium for each of the three concerts.

The subsequent UK leg tightened security as a result. Although fans tend to congregate outside venues for singalongs, Wembley Stadium warned it would move any gatherings on.

Centuries-old doorway may have led to Shakespeare's dressing room

Jessica Murray

Midlands correspondent

A 600-year-old doorway that may have once led to Shakespeare's dressing room has been discovered in the UK's oldest working theatre.

The discovery of the archway, at St George's Guildhall, in King's Lynn, Norfolk, occurred during archaeological investigations at the guildhall's theatre, and was triggered by curiosity about a "weird shape" in a wall.

Tim FitzHigham, the guildhall's creative director, called the find "mindboggling" and said the archway had to be pre-1405 "as the hall's medieval roof is held up above it".

He added: "We've got a door that would definitely have been here in the years we think Shakespeare played here and, in all likelihood, was the door to a room where the players changed and stored props. It is simply staggering that again a slight hunch or weird shape in the wall has turned out to be something frankly extraordinary."

FitzHigham said the archway had been identified as the door to what was believed to have been the guild robing room. "This room was used by the highest level of guild members to dress in their finery before feasting upstairs. The guilds ceased using the hall, and the room likely took on the role of a dressing room or 'tiring house' for visiting actors."

The Grade I-listed St George's Guildhall, described as the largest intact medieval guildhall in England, is undergoing a big conservation project. In Shakespeare's time the building was used extensively by touring companies. Shakespeare and his company were believed to be on tour in King's Lynn between 1592 and 1593 when London's theatres were closed because of a plague outbreak.

Dr Jonathan Clarke, an archaeologist who helped uncover the archway, said the doorway would have led to a "medium-sized, low-status room" and would probably have been covered by a hanging.

"It is the type of room where travelling groups of players might change, due to its location within the guildhall," he said. "It would have given them a private space where they could put things, change and then travel up the staircase to appear on the first floor in their costume."



▲ The archway in St George's Guildhall in King's Lynn, Norfolk



President urges voters to protect US democracy by electing Harris as successor

Joan E Greve
Chicago

Joe Biden and Kamala Harris took to the stage at the Democratic national convention on Monday night as the president urged the nation to elect his would-be successor to protect American democracy.

Endorsing Harris, Biden, who just a month ago withdrew from the presidential race, said: "Giving my word as a Biden, I can honestly say I'm more optimistic about the future than I was when I was elected as a 29-year-old United States senator."

Drawing a sharp contrast between Harris and Donald Trump, Biden said: "Violent crime has dropped to the lowest level of more than 50 years, and crime will keep coming down when we put a prosecutor in the Oval Office instead of a convicted felon."

In what may be one of his last major speeches as president, Biden

looked back on his presidential term, reminding Americans that he took office just two weeks after the 6 January attack on the US Capitol, when the country was still in the early grips of the coronavirus pandemic.

"Yet, I believe then and I believe now, that progress was and is possible. Justice is achievable, and our best days are not behind us. They're before us," Biden said. "With a grateful heart, I stand before you now on this August night to report that democracy has prevailed. Democracy has delivered, and now democracy must be preserved."

Only a few weeks ago, Biden was expected to be on the convention stage this week to accept his party's nomination for the second time. Instead, Biden shocked the nation with his decision to not seek re-election.

Turning his attention to his one-time rival for describing America as a "failing nation". "When he talks

about America being a failing nation, he says we're losing. He's the loser. He's dead wrong," Biden said to loud cheers from the audience.

Harris's appearance on stage was a surprise, ahead of her formal speech to the convention at the end of the week. She electrified the crowd when she entered the stage, with Beyoncé's Freedom playing in the background. "Looking out at everyone tonight, I see the beauty of our great nation. People from every corner of our country and every walk of life are here united by our shared vision for the future of our country," she said.

Turning to Biden she said: "Joe, thank you for your historic leadership, for your lifetime of service, and for all you will continue to do, we are forever grateful to you."

Biden's speech was not without its moments of conflict. One group of pro-Palestinian demonstrators displayed a banner reading: "Stop arming Israel!" Others attempted



▲ The US president, Joe Biden, endorses the Democratic candidate Kamala Harris alongside his family, top, while civil rights activists, top left, and other convention

attendees look on. Above, pro-Palestinian demonstrators gather outside the Democratic national convention in Chicago

PHOTOGRAPHS: ROBYN BECK; ALEX WROBLEWSKI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

to rip the banner away from them. There appeared to be isolated shouts attacking Biden over his response to the war in Gaza, but those protesters were drowned out by the president's supporters chanting: "We love Joe!"

However, the president did not shy away from discussing the war in Gaza. Nodding to the pro-ceasefire protests unfolding in Chicago this week, Biden said: "A lot of innocent people are being killed on both sides."

Of the ceasefire negotiations, Biden said, "We're working around the clock, my secretary of state, [to] prevent a wider war, reunite hostages with their families and surge



Sketch David Smith



Biden had expected to wear the crown again. Instead, he was reduced to the warm-up act

Joe Biden took the stage and held his daughter, Ashley, in a long embrace, whispered some tender words and wiped tears from his eyes. She smiled and kissed his hand. The pair seemed to be at the quiet centre of a storm.

Around them more than 20,000 stood, applauded, roared and chanted: "We love Joe." The US president walked to the lectern, smiling, pointing, looked pensive, smiled again and dabbed his nose with a handkerchief. "I love you!" he shouted back, knowing there won't be another night like this. "That was my daughter!"

The adulatory cheering continued for all of four and a half minutes. It was the culmination of a night that for Biden must have felt either like receiving an honorary Oscar or giving the oration at his own funeral.

Among those chanting was Nancy Pelosi, the former speaker of the House of Representatives. She was among the party leaders who decided to override the primary election and tell the 81-year-old president that his time was up.

That intervention changed everything at this Democratic national convention in Chicago. Biden had expected to give the closing speech after accepting the presidential nomination. Instead he was the opening act.

Donald Trump observed on social media: "They are throwing him out on the Monday night stage, known as Death Valley." Worse still, Biden did not appear until 10.26pm



▲ Nancy Pelosi's intervention had changed everything for Chicago

Aides say it is the same plane with a different pilot, but anyone in Biden's shoes would surely be hurt by their eagerness to move on

humanitarian, health and food assistance into Gaza now to end the civilian suffering of the Palestinian people and finally, finally, finally, deliver a ceasefire and end this war."

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez gave one of the most energetic speeches of the night, talking about her roots as a bartender as she said: "America has before us a rare and precious opportunity in Kamala Harris. We have a chance to elect a president who is for the middle class, because she is from the middle class. She understands the urgency of rent checks and groceries and prescriptions. She is as committed to our reproductive and civil rights as she is to taking on corporate greed." The congresswoman also earned loud applause for saying that Harris was "working tirelessly to secure a ceasefire in Gaza and bringing hostages home".

Hillary Clinton, the former secretary of state and 2016 presidential candidate, also gave an impassioned speech, outlining the historic nature of Harris's nomination. She said: "I see the freedom to look our children in the eye and say, 'In America, you can go as far as your hard work and talent will take you,' and mean it."

"And you know what? On the other side of that glass ceiling is Kamala Harris, raising her hand and taking the oath of office as our 47th president ... Because when a barrier falls for one of us, it falls and clears the way for all of us."

Chicago time, which was 11.26pm in New York and Washington. Yet again Democrats had decided he was not fit for prime time.

All of it shows the mercilessness of politics and the mercilessness of time. How quickly the golden boy becomes yesterday's man.

There may be a kernel of Biden seething with a lifetime's resentments. The needless plagiarism row that scuppered his first run for president in 1988. The failure to get off the ground in 2008. The way that Barack Obama gave Hillary Clinton the nod instead of him in 2016.

He overcame it all to reach the summit in 2020, proving the man for the moment of the bleak pandemic winter. Yes, his victory said, unglamorous strivers can be president too. Biden will for ever be in the school textbooks as the 46th.

But he'll be there as a one-term president rather than two. He didn't quite have the last laugh as Obama, Pelosi, Chuck Schumer and Hakeem Jeffries concluded he had to hand back the crown.

"I've got five months left in my presidency," he told his 13th Democratic convention. "I've got a lot to do. I intend to get it done. It's been the honour of my lifetime to serve as your president. I love the job, but I love my country more."

The relief has been palpable, as the ecstatic reaction to a surprise appearance by Kamala Harris made clear. Democratic aides say it is the same plane with a different pilot but anyone in Biden's shoes would surely be hurt by their eagerness to move on.

Biden came out with all guns blazing. He was a man unburdened, liberated and unrecognisable from the doddering June debate. Biden 2028! He spoke for nearly 50 minutes, his voice strong and clear. He said pro-Palestinian protesters outside "have a point". He articulated a vision for America in the world. And he issued a clarion call: "Democracy has prevailed. Democracy has delivered. And now democracy must be preserved."

Earlier, Jill Biden recounted the moment that she saw him "dig deep into his soul and decide to no longer seek re-election - and endorse Kamala Harris".

No wonder Biden has a love of Irish poetry. Of course WB Yeats's lines, "When you are old and grey and full of sleep / and nodding by the fire" seems all too applicable these days. But you can also imagine him telling Jill: "One man loved the pilgrim soul in you / And loved the sorrows of your changing face."



Tan suit Was the aim to bait angry Republicans?

Helen Sullivan

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a prominent female politician in possession of a wardrobe will have her outfits divined for clues about who she is and what she thinks. The Democratic presidential nominee, Kamala Harris, is no exception.

But the dissection of Harris's choice of outfit took on a different tone after her surprise appearance at the Democratic national convention on Monday evening, with some asking simply: is she trolling us?

Disinformation Trump posts fake endorsement by Taylor Swift

Donald Trump shared AI-generated images of Taylor Swift and her fans vowing support for his presidential campaign on Sunday, reposting them with the caption "I accept!" on his Truth Social platform.

These deepfakes were part of a slew of images made with artificial intelligence that the former president has disseminated in recent days straddling the line between parody and outright election disinformation.

The AI images Trump shared over the weekend depicted women in "Swifties for Trump" T-shirts, as well as one showing the singer dressed as Uncle Sam encouraging people to vote for the Republican presidential nominee. Each image was a screenshot from the social media platform X, originally posted



▲ Reposted images appeared falsely to show Swift, above, backing Trump

◀ All right for them: Obama and Reagan in 'unpresidential' attire

Harris wore a tan-coloured suit: a colour that Barack Obama favoured during his two terms in office. Back then, it was an outfit choice that drove Republicans and rightwing pundits mad.

Fox News host Lou Dobbs declared it was "shocking to a lot of people" that Obama wore a tan suit in 2014 to discuss escalating the US response to Islamic State in Syria. The choice was "unpresidential", former Republican representative Peter King said, according to New York Magazine. "I don't think any of us can excuse what the president did yesterday."

The White House said at the time Obama stood behind the decision to "wear his summer suit".

While some argued that Harris's suit was in fact camel, the phrase #tansuit was trending on X, as people speculated whether Harris was intentionally trolling, baiting or aiming to trigger the Republicans and/or Fox News.

Joe Biden wore a navy suit for his speech at the DNC on Monday night. But US presidents, all of them men, have at times been more outgoing, menswear writer Derek Guy pointed out: "Reagan wore tan suits, plaid suits, and even tartan blazers."

Reagan even wore a tan suit when appointing Donald Rumsfeld, discussing the "war on drugs", addressing US-Soviet diplomatic talks and answering to his veto of the defense appropriation bill.

For Harris the choice of tan suit - by the label Chloé - may have reflected the fact that she was not delivering a scheduled speech, so was, in a way, off duty.

by rightwing accounts with a history of sharing misinformation. Swift has not endorsed Trump.

Trump's posts came days after he shared an AI-generated image depicting Kamala Harris holding a communist military rally at the Democratic national convention, as well as a deepfake video of him dancing with X's owner, Elon Musk, who has endorsed him.

Trump's embrace of AI imagery threatens to further cloud already murky information around the presidential election. He routinely promotes falsehoods and conspiracy theories. Concern over AI-generated content influencing elections has been raised throughout the boom in the technology. AI-generated misinformation has circulated around elections worldwide, with videos and images used to troll opponents and fake endorsements.

Trump also claimed falsely that a genuine image of a Harris campaign rally was due to AI, saying the event never took place.

His claim reflected a concept that disinformation researchers call the "liar's dividend", in which an increase in manipulated content leads to general scepticism.

Nick Robins-Early

V O L V O

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Going bananas Cult show with man in gorilla suit returns as fringe favourite

Mark Fisher

The queue snakes around the bar, stretches down the corridor and up the tightly packed lane to Edinburgh's Victoria Street. It is first-come first-served, and nobody wants to miss out. As the audience rush into the Liquid Room's Warehouse, the mood is fevered. The stage is empty but for a rocking chair, yet people are taking selfies in front of it. The conversation is loud and animated. Someone is blowing bubbles.

This one-off performance is the definition of fringe cult. We are here for the 15th annual appearance of *A Young Man Dressed As A Gorilla Dressed As An Old Man Sits Rocking In A Rocking Chair For Fifty-Six Minutes And Then Leaves*. All you need to know about the show is in the title. The atmosphere is something else.

Imagine a cross between *Mornington Crescent* on BBC Radio 4's *I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue* and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*: a game in which the rules are opaque and audience participation is fundamental. It is as if the Dada movement has gone mainstream.

To ear-splitting applause, on comes the gorilla. Dressed in tweed jacket, glasses and cap, he settles into the rocking chair with his pipe at the ready. The audience shush themselves then roar with laughter - their own reverence is funny.

So little happens over the next

It seems as if
Dada's gone
mainstream
... ecstasy
follows when
the gorilla
scratches his
ear or nods

► Now in its
15th year,
the one-off
performance
played to a
packed house -
to wild applause

PHOTOGRAPH:
MURDO MACLEOD/
THE GUARDIAN



hour that the smallest movement becomes momentous. That is the joke. It is comedy Butoh. The chair rocks back, the audience gasp in anticipation, the chair rocks forward and the audience cheer.

Two or three times this process builds enough tension to win a tumultuous standing ovation.

Given patience you see there are variations. After 20 minutes

the gorilla slowly raises his pipe to his mouth, generating hysteria in the room. "Show some respect," shouts someone. "Pushing at the boundaries," says another. Ecstasy follows when the gorilla scratches his ear, beats his chest, or nods.

But the performance - and the pleasure - is as much offstage as on. Phone torches are held aloft. Terrace chants come and go. A man

is booed for going to the bar. Half a dozen people put bananas on the stage. Someone dares to replace the gorilla's glasses with some shades, prompting a chant of "let him see!"

"Do your old stuff" is the best heckle of the night. "Be careful", a close second. Despite calls for "one more song" the gorilla leaves without climax or fanfare - at 56 minutes precisely.

Review Gleeful horror pastiche gets spookier as it proceeds

Gay Witch Sex Cult
*Pleasance Courtyard,
Edinburgh*
★★★★☆

Brian Logan

Come to a show called *Gay Witch Sex Cult*, and you don't expect a host like this. Kaelan Trough is an estate agent, suited up, smug and prepping a gender reveal party for his new baby.

OK, the baby will be raised by Kaelan and his partner, Jeremy: gay, we can account for. But witch sex cult? Well, we mustn't talk about that, says Andrew Doherty's camp and narcissistic alter ego, who'd rather crow about how much sex he's having, and reveals his misogyny in dismissive remarks about the baby's surrogate mum.

You can't help but love him, though. Doherty has created a compelling comic monster here: ditzy, self-absorbed but also puppyish and vulnerable, not least to the occult forces at play once the backstory to the party is divulged.

In episodic flashback, Kaelan recounts a boat trip to a deserted island, the ferryman uttering gnomish prophecies. There, lonely trees look uncannily like women, an axe-wielding maniac runs amok and a cave is littered with the skeletons of babies. Folk-horror red flags all, which he is usually too dim - too busy preening or gossiping - to notice, far less piece together.

It's a ticklish confection that gets spookier as it proceeds: Doherty demonstrates that a gleefully

undercutting and silly sense of humour is no bar to full-blown scares. His performance is a treat: all eye rolls, camp moues to the audience, and his tongue leaping out of his mouth whenever he gets excitable. And the show is peppered with daft jokes, some of which miraculously contrive to build tension too: certainly the fate that befalls Kaelan's crab companion, Gonzalo.

There are a few loose ends still flapping when Doherty's plot ties up; the journey is more satisfying than the destination. But *Gay Witch Sex Cult* remains the finest horror pastiche I can recall on the fringe since Garth Marengi hit his peak.

Review Three-way fun as improv gang gets gung-ho

3
*Assembly George Square,
Edinburgh*
★★★★☆
Brian Logan

Before she became a star via *This Is Going to Hurt* and *One Day*, Ambika Mod trained with improv company the Free Association. She rejoins them in 3, in which three performers use three words from the audience to build three connected scenes. Tonight, *Spies*, *Breakfast* and *Chicken* trigger what I can just about call a story involving parents at a play area, a kinky one-night stand, and a misbegotten plan to save an egg from a grasping hen dealer.

Two of the FA's core team, Naomi Petersen and Graham Dickson, risk squeezing Mod out in the opening scene. She resorts to playing a character who can't get a word in edgewise, while Petersen and Dickson variously flirt and scheme as two spies disguised as a mum and dad at a playground gate. That imbalance largely resolves itself, but - while she's clearly a fine improviser - Mod performs at a lower-key pitch and pace than her co-stars. They're more on the front foot and, once or twice, they steamroller her narrative ideas.

Not to great profit: delightful though it is to watch the story stitching in action, it results at this performance in a fairly threadbare garment. But if narrative satisfaction is only partial, the comic pleasure is abundant, as the trio spirit out of nowhere a child who can't stop biting dogs, a barbershop quartet who offer sexual services on the side, and a lascivious poultry baron. At the end, the trio tie themselves in knots trying to resolve who's who, who's a spy, and who's on whose side. But as they first tangle then strive to untangle, it's great fun watching three performers with gung-ho spirit and no little craft - special guest very much included.

Until 26 August



▲ Ambika Mod (left) joins the Free Association's Graham Dickson and Naomi Petersen in this improv show

Until 25 August



Winds of change Keir Starmer, the prime minister, and Eluned Morgan, the first minister of Wales, visited Brechfa Forest West windfarm in Carmarthenshire yesterday to highlight Labour's plans to make Britain a green energy superpower, as a YouGov survey for the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit showed nearly 70% of British people support the setting up of the publicly owned body Great British Energy.

PHOTOGRAPH: BEN BIRCHALL/AP

The turbine defender Easing the resistance to clean energy tech

Helena Horton

Environment reporter

The prospect of pylons, wind turbines and solar farms springing up across the countryside has upset a number of UK communities. But the chair of Energy UK, Emma Pinchbeck, believes there is a way to decarbonise our electricity and soothe these tensions.

Pinchbeck is the next leader of the Climate Change Committee, and represents the industry which is charged with decarbonising the grid at the cheapest and fastest rate possible.

She understands why many feel resistance to the idea of changing the countryside: she lives in the Cotswolds, in an area of outstanding natural beauty. "I'm the 10th generation of my family to come from this land," she says. "My granny's brothers all farmed it.



▲ Emma Pinchbeck says her job will mean 'reaching people emotionally'

"I intellectually understand that tackling climate change is about largely other parts of the world that will be much more impacted than I will be, or this landscape will be. But emotionally, I have a very strong, 'small c' conservative, instinct that I don't want this landscape to change, and I want to hand it to my children."

As the energy secretary, Ed Miliband, unblocks the planning system to allow onshore wind and solar to be built, these are feelings many in the countryside have.

"Change can be quite frightening," says Pinchbeck, "and there is this kind of national romance about British identity and kind of green and pleasant lands and that kind of countryside. I think you've got to reach people emotionally and not try and tell them that is a stupid instinct."

Instead, she says, it's important to work with community groups to find out if there is a way they can accept change and understand that the energy sector and government aren't "taking the mickey".

"It's not just that we're just going to build as much infrastructure, as fast and as selfishly as possible," she says. "You've got to convince people you're doing the minimum amount that you truly need."

Community benefits are also being mooted, such as cutting bills for those most affected by green energy infrastructure, or funding sports halls or services in the area.

"We really support that," she says. "I think the nature of the energy transition is there will be some places where there's more infrastructure than others, because you go where the resources are. The east coast is an example. Scotland is an example. I think, where you're asking people to essentially host a load of infrastructure for other parts of the country to benefit from cheaper energy bills, you can acknowledge that they are carrying more responsibility for the transition."

Some energy firms are already doing this. If local communities

support a windfarm, they can get discounts on bills. Octopus says this has led to people asking for turbines to be built in their area.

At least two of the candidates for the Tory leadership have taken up positions on the issue. Priti Patel has campaigned against the loosening of the planning system, while her opponent Robert Jenrick has said the country should slow down in meeting net zero.

Pinchbeck said: "There's no doubt that energy is politicised in a way that few other areas of the economy are. And I know that because one of my jobs at Energy UK is to talk to the leads of other trade bodies. They're just sort of baffled by the relationship that we have with politics and the media."

The less renewable energy is politicised the better, she argues, pointing to the rising populism in the US. "There's a risk of that getting imported over to the UK in our politics, and I think that would be a real tragedy, because the energy sector and the kind of private utilities I work for, want to do it regardless of climate change, we just think the technology is better. It's better for bill payers. It's better for the economy. We are in a race with every other economy around the world, including China, to get this stuff here."

The critical point, she argues, is that everyone will benefit if cheap, clean energy is built and if climate impacts - ultimately far more destructive to the countryside than pylons - are diminished.

Badger culling may have increased risk of bovine TB in nearby cattle

Amarion Scarlett-Reid

England's controversial badger cull may have increased the risk of bovine tuberculosis among herds of cattle in neighbouring areas, according to new research.

Researchers at the University of Oxford found that although badger culling reduced incidences of tuberculosis in the areas where it took place, in neighbouring areas the risk of the disease in cattle increased by almost a third.

Badger culling has been ongoing in England for several years as part of an effort to eradicate bovine tuberculosis (bTB) - a disease that spreads between cattle or via contaminated equipment, but can also be spread by infected badgers.

In that time the culls have killed more than 200,000 badgers - half the population of the UK, according to the Badger Trust.

Labour in opposition said it would end the culls, but no announcement has been made since the election.

In a two-part study, researchers re-analysed data from the Randomised Badger Culling Trial (RCBT) that took place between 1998 and 2005. The initial study produced data consistent with the RCBT showing beneficial results to cattle in the areas where culling took place. However, a secondary study using peer-reviewed analyses of the RCBT found a 29% increased risk of bTB infections in cattle in surrounding areas.

The secondary study aimed to address scientists' concern around the "lack of evidence" supporting the RCBT experiment. It also suggested that irrespective of the methodology used, culling during the RCBT was associated with an increased risk of tuberculosis in neighbouring cattle.

Analysis of neighbouring cattle revealed, however, that the risk of bTB spread among cattle increased only while culling took place. The researchers said this suggested that "careful consideration" of neighbouring areas was needed when devising culling strategies.

A Defra spokesperson said: "This government will roll out a TB eradication package including vaccination, herd management and biosecurity measures to meet our objective to get to bovine TB-free status and end the badger cull."

Badgers can spread bovine TB



Stop and search is not best way to cut violent crime, study finds

Vikram Dodd

Police and crime correspondent

Stop and search by police is one of the less effective tactics to tackle rising violence such as knife crime, according to the results of a study.

Research by the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF), a charity funded by the Home Office to combat youth violence, found that other tactics – such as community-led focused deterrence, putting more officers on the streets in troubled areas or mentoring and diversion for potential suspects – produced bigger reductions.

The charity says its study “casts doubt on the effectiveness of increasing the use of stop and search to reduce violent crime”.

Stop and search is one of the most controversial police powers because people from ethnic minorities

– especially young black men – are disproportionately targeted for its use, leading to mistrust and trauma.

The most effective anti-violence tactic was found to be focused deterrence, which achieved a 33% reduction in incidents, six times greater than stop and search.

Focused deterrence involves police working with local services – such as health, education and housing – and community organisations to identify those most likely to commit violence, then working with them when they are young.

In Glasgow, the average age of those taking part in deterrence initiatives was 16, and it costs £1,500 for each participant. A £7m pilot using focused deterrence is under way in Coventry, Nottingham, Leicester, Manchester and Wolverhampton.

Mentoring and diversion reduced violence by 21%, reoffending by 19%

and all offending by 14%, the study found. The best results were achieved when the mentoring was carried out by counsellors rather than teachers or police officers.

Hotspot policing, where officers stage high-visibility patrols, cut violence by 14% and drug offences by 30%. The study by the YEF examined research from around the world on each of the anti-violence tactics.

Stop and search achieved a 5% cut in violence in England and Wales, the study found, though in the US the reduction was 13%.

In 2022-23, police used stop and search powers more than 500,000

5%

Drop in violence achieved by stop and search in England and Wales, against 33% by focused deterrence

times in England and Wales. Most searches found nothing, with 14% leading to an arrest and 3% finding a weapon, the study says.

Officers need reasonable suspicion to use the power, and six out of 10 searches were for alleged drug possession.

Black people are four times more likely to be subject to a stop and search than white people, and the tactic is a key part of the racial fault line between police and the communities they serve.

Jon Yates, the executive director of the YEF, said: “Stop and search is an essential police power, but simply increasing the numbers of searches is no silver bullet on knife crime.”

“When used poorly, it has little effect on violence and erodes trust in the police.”

Yates added: “If we want less knife crime, we have to focus more on the other important things that our police do: like regularly being present in areas where violence is high, making sure that children arrested with knives get corrective support fast and targeting those heavily involved in violence. It’s not about being tough or soft on crime, we have to be smart. We have to do what works.”

Opioid drugs were linked to 80% of 2023’s drugs deaths



‘Concerning’: Scotland’s drug deaths remain worst in EU amid 12% rise

Libby Brooks

Scotland correspondent

Scotland’s drug deaths remain the worst in Europe, as ministers pledged to intensify efforts to deal with the problem after a “hugely concerning” 12% increase in fatalities last year.

The health secretary, Neil Gray, said the Scottish government was “working hard to respond to the growing threat from highly dangerous, super-strong synthetic opioids like nitazenes” which were involved in 23 deaths. Figures released yesterday show a 12% rise in deaths, with drugs claiming the lives of 1,172 Scots in 2023 – up 121 on the previous year. Gray said: “My heartfelt condolences go to all those affected by the loss of a loved one through drugs. This level of deaths remains hugely concerning and underlines why we will continue to do all we can to reduce harm and deaths caused by drugs.”

Agencies working with addicts said the “measurable failures” driving this public health emergency remained the same.

Austin Smith, from the Scottish Drugs Forum, said: “The big story is the old story, that not enough people are getting into treatment and when they do, they aren’t being offered the sort of wraparound care that they need to support them with the reasons they have been self-medicating.”

The National Records of Scotland data showed that opioid drugs, such as heroin and methadone, were implicated in 80% of all drugs deaths last year, as agencies cautioned against overplaying concerns about new substances being responsible for the increase.

The number of deaths involving bromazolam – a type of benzodiazepine used to treat anxiety disorders, insomnia and seizures – rose from 54 in 2022 to 426 last year, while deaths involving synthetic opioids known as nitazenes – which have flooded the market in the US since the Taliban’s disruption of the global drugs trade – rose from just one to 23 in 12 months.

There was also a sharp rise in cocaine overdoses, with the drug a factor in 479 deaths in 2023, an increase from 371 deaths in 2022.

Gray said his government was “taking a wide range of actions through our £250m national mission on drugs, including opening a safer drug consumption facility pilot”.

Veterans join archaeologists to reveal fate of fallen at Battle of Waterloo

Sammy Gecsoyler

From chopped limbs to ground-down remains, the fate of those killed in the bloody Battle of Waterloo has long been the subject of macabre speculation. Now, a team of archaeologists will seek to provide some answers by digging at the site in Belgium.

The battle, which took place in June 1815 in the province of Walloon Brabant, killed about 20,000 men. In 2022, an excavation at the site of a former field hospital at Mont-Saint-Jean farm discovered horses that had been executed, buried alongside a human skeleton.

The discovery was the second complete human skeleton ever excavated on the Belgian battlefield. The amputated limbs of wounded men and the skeletons of three horses were also found at the site.

The archaeology and veteran support charity Waterloo Uncovered will carry out a targeted excavation next month to uncover the full extent of the burial pit in an attempt to establish what happened to the dead.

Historical evidence suggests that many skeletons were dug up and ground down to be used as fertiliser and in the production of sugar. The discovery of skeletons on the battlefield was described as “a highly unusual and historically significant occurrence” by archaeologists.

Prof Tony Pollard of the University of Glasgow, the project’s archaeological director, said: “It’s an incredibly



▲ Horses and humans were buried alongside each other ‘with care’ in the same trench on the

field hospital site at Mont-Saint-Jean farm

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRIS VAN HOUTS/WATERLOO UNCOVERED/PA



exciting site – the presence of amputated limbs, a complete human burial and remains of euthanised horses in one trench make the site at Mont-Saint-Jean truly unique.

“Finding horses – which had been put out of their misery by shots to the head – and humans buried alongside each other, especially with the care

and separation evident in this trench, is extremely rare.”

From 3 to 13 September an international team of military veterans, serving personnel, archaeologists and volunteers will continue work at Mont-Saint-Jean. Previous excavations at the site uncovered evidence of an unrecorded attack on the hospital and how the French nearly tipped the battle in their favour in the gardens of Hougoumont.

Waterloo Uncovered’s chief executive officer, Abigail Boyle, said: “Waterloo Uncovered supports veterans with their recovery and transition into civilian life.”

“On site, veterans and serving beneficiaries will learn key transferable archaeological skills, which will provide pathways into education, employment, or simply enable them to enjoy archaeology as a hobby.”

“Even professional archaeologists rarely get to work on a site of this calibre – it’s really a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

‘A human burial and euthanised horses make the site unique’

Prof Tony Pollard

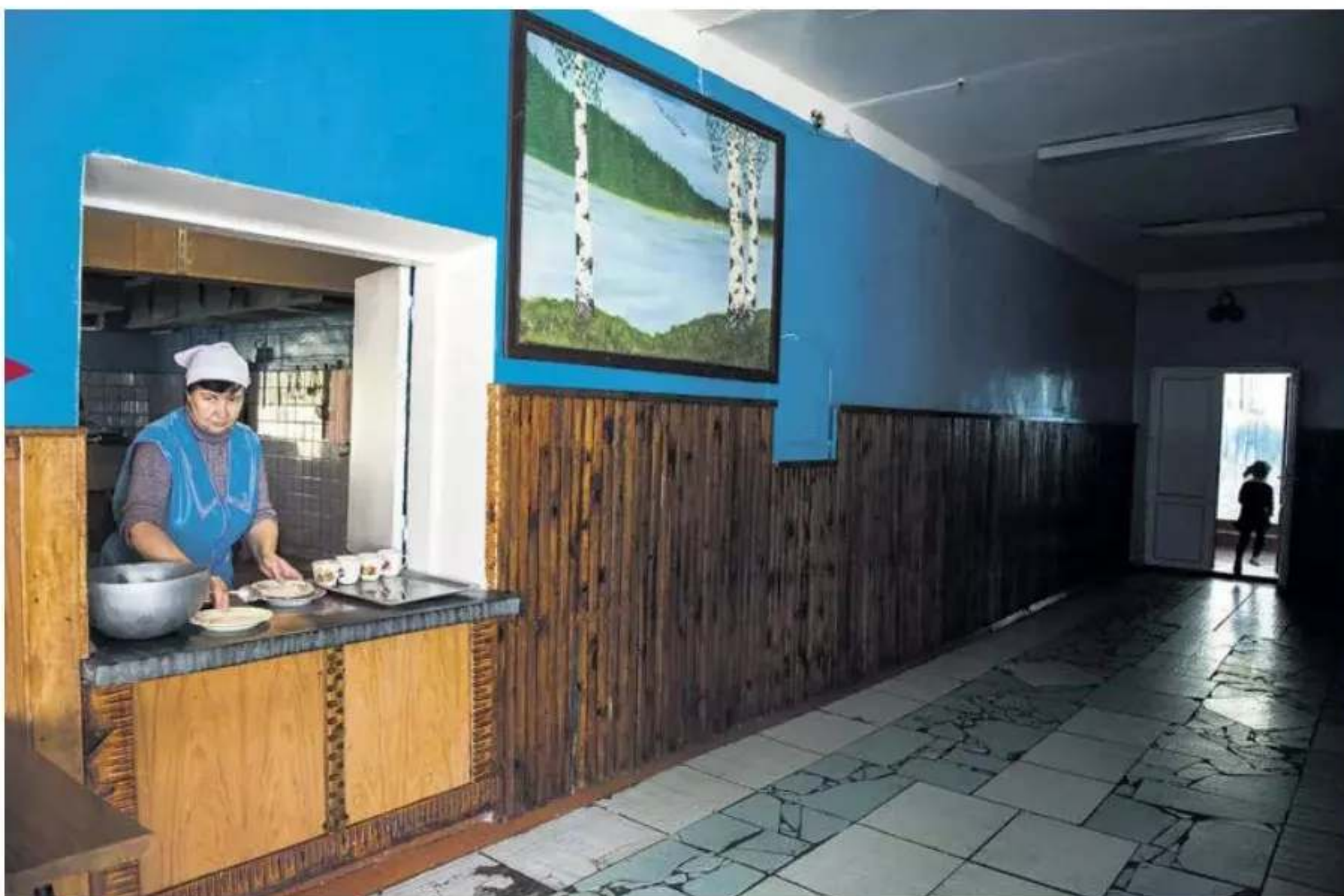
Archaeological director

Eyewitness



The lost world of Chernobyl

After first journeying to Chernobyl – the Ukrainian transliteration of the name – in 2002, Pierpaolo Mittica spent six years photographing the people who inhabited and passed through the exclusion zone of the 1986 disaster. Russia's invasion of Ukraine put paid to that as almost everyone has been evacuated and the site's perimeter has been defensively mined – so these pictures are of a vanished life. Chernobyl by Pierpaolo Mittica is published by GOST Books.



▲ The control room of Reactor 2 in Chernobyl nuclear power plant, 2016. The disaster spewed contamination 200 times greater than the atomic bomb at Hiroshima

◀ The school canteen in Radinka, 2015, a village just 300 metres from the zone's border, where residents live with the health effects of high levels of contamination



▼ A 'stalker' - a young Ukrainian in the exclusion zone illegally to play survival games - with a mock gas mask in Pripjat, 2017

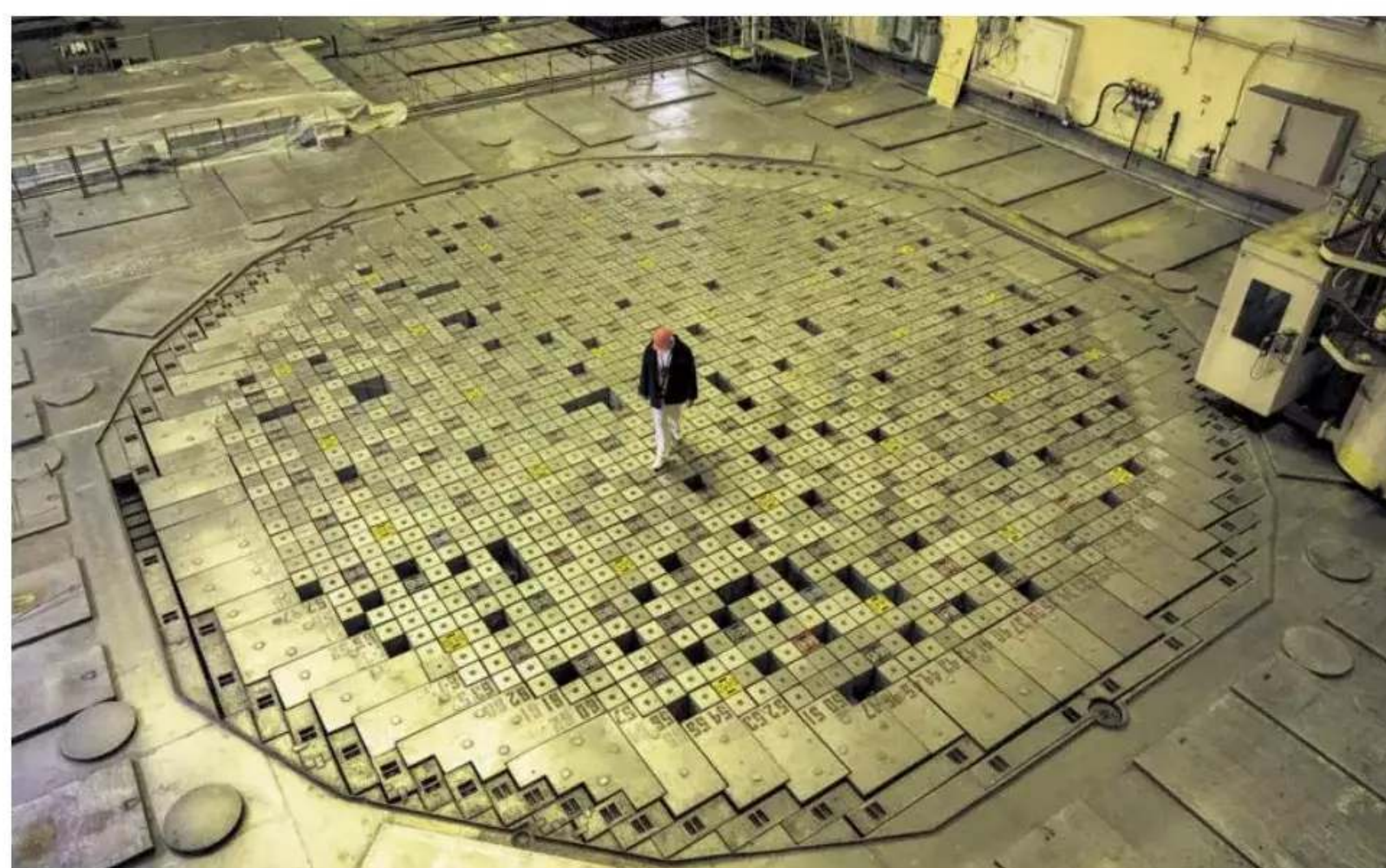


▼ A souvenir shop in Dytiatky, a checkpoint to the Chornobyl exclusion zone, 2019. About 60,000 people a year used to visit the zone



▲ Maria Semenyuk, 78, at home in Paryshev, 2015. Mittica documented the lives of many who returned to their heavily contaminated villages after being evacuated

◀ An abandoned school, 2016. About 4,000 people called Chornobyl home before the war, from military and police to scientists studying the disaster's fallout



▲ A tourist takes a souvenir photo in the Chornobyl exclusion zone, 2015. The zone was opened to tourists in 2011, but the area is now heavily mined

◀ The rods that controlled the nuclear reaction at Reactor 3, 2019. 'The dead zone was full of life before the war. Today, it is a zone of total exclusion,' says Mittica

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Afghan women to finish their medical degrees in Edinburgh

Severin Carrell
Scotland editor

A group of aspiring female doctors from Afghanistan have travelled to Edinburgh to complete their medical degrees after they were forced to quit studying by the Taliban.

The 19 women arrived in the UK yesterday after a three-year campaign by the parents of Linda Norgrove, the kidnapped Scottish charity worker who was killed during a botched rescue attempt by US special forces in 2010. The Linda Norgrove Foundation, set up and run by her parents,



◀ Lorna Norgrove, the mother of aid worker Linda Norgrove, welcomes the women at Edinburgh airport

PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW MILLIGAN/PA

John and Lorna, from home in Uig in the Outer Hebrides, said the students had been effectively confined to their homes, in fear for their lives, since the Taliban regained power in 2021.

The foundation worked with UK and Scottish government officials to arrange safe passage and student visas for the women. They have been given places at four medical schools after Scottish ministers changed the law to treat them as home students eligible for free tuition.

The foundation said significant effort had gone into negotiating legal and bureaucratic hurdles to bring them to the UK.

It negotiated their travel to Pakistan to apply for UK visas, Pakistani visas, biometrics, accommodation, student funding applications and UK bank accounts, and their student accommodation in the UK. All told, it spent about £60,000.

Many of the women were based in Kabul, but some had come from

remote provinces, including Bamyan, Wardak and Daykundi.

In a statement issued by the foundation, one of the 19 students, Omulbanin Sultani, said that the Norgroves and their assistant “had saved our lives in every sense of the word” after supporting them over the last three years.

“It fills me with immense pride and joy to stand here today on this beautiful day,” she said. “But let me tell you, being here was not as easy as these

words make it seem. We endured a thousand days of suffering to reach this point.”

Another student, Zahra Hussaini, 19, who had completed her first year of medicine when the Taliban regained power, said it was “a dream” to arrive in the UK. She hoped that by the time she was fully qualified, she could return home.

“Our journey here will be long enough, maybe for eight years, nine years, and I think during this time many alterations and changes will come to Afghanistan,” she said. “I am hopeful that the situation won’t remain the same.”

John Norgrove said it was heartening that the UK and Scottish governments had collaborated so closely on the project.

“Finally these 19 incredibly talented young women get their future back with the opportunity of a tremendous education and a career. The alternative for them in Afghanistan wasn’t good,” he said.

Linda Norgrove, then 36, was working for the US charity Development Alternatives Incorporated when she was kidnapped by Islamist militants in September 2010 in Kunar province, Afghanistan. Her death, apparently caused by a US fragmentation grenade thrown during the rescue attempt, caused consternation in the US and UK, and a joint inquiry by both governments.

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World



Bodies of six Israeli civilians taken hostage in October recovered in Gaza, says IDF

Bethan McKernan
Jerusalem

Israel has recovered the bodies of six hostages who were seized during the attack by Hamas on 7 October last year and taken to Gaza, its military announced yesterday.

An overnight operation in Khan Younis, southern Gaza, found the bodies of Yagev Buchshtab, Alexander Dancyg, Avraham Munder, Yoram Metzger, Nadav Popplewell and Chaim Peri.

All were civilians abducted from their homes in kibbutzim adjacent to Israel's barrier wall with the Gaza Strip, the Israel Defense Forces said.

The military gave no details about how or when the men died. Over the past few months the families of all

six had announced the men had been killed after being briefed on IDF intelligence findings.

Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, praised the recovery effort and said "our hearts ache for the terrible loss". He added: "The state of Israel will continue to make every effort to return all of our hostages - the living and the deceased."

In Gaza yesterday at least 10 people were killed in an Israeli airstrike on a school housing displaced families west of Gaza City, its civil defence authorities said. Israel said the school was being used as a Hamas base.

The number and identity of the estimated 120 Israelis who remain in captivity in Gaza, and the sequencing of how they might be released, is one of the key stumbling blocks in the renewed ceasefire talks. The US

secretary of state, Antony Blinken, on Monday described the current round of negotiations as "maybe the last opportunity" to broker a truce agreement in the 10-month-old conflict.

In a call with Netanyahu yesterday afternoon, Keir Starmer expressed his condolences about the hostages while also stressing his support for the US-brokered peace efforts.

The message from No 10 said: "The leaders discussed diplomatic efforts to secure a ceasefire and [hostage] release. The prime minister welcomed Israel's support for the American 'bridging proposal' and emphasised the need to move quickly. Regional de-escalation was in everyone's interests as the impact of miscalculation would come at great costs for all, the leaders agreed." US officials have been criticised for

being too optimistic in their claims that negotiators are on the verge of striking a deal; several rounds of talks since December have failed.

Netanyahu has been accused of obstructing a ceasefire deal for political gain, claims he denies. On Monday his office put out a public statement in which he appeared to support the "bridging proposal" suggested by the US and agreed in Qatar last week. But large gaps remain between the sides as mediators prepare to meet again in Cairo today or tomorrow.

Hamas is not directly participating in these negotiations and has said the latest proposal on the table veers too closely to Israel's demands. Yesterday the militant group said comments by Joe Biden that they were backing away from an agreement with Israel were "misleading".

The plan would involve an initial six-week ceasefire, during which a limited number of female, elderly and

▲ The US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, has called the current round of talks 'the last opportunity'

PHOTOGRAPH: KEVIN MOHATT/REUTERS

sick Israeli hostages would be freed in exchange for Palestinians held in Israeli jails. It would be indefinitely extendable while negotiators settled the second stage, in which soldiers and bodies would be returned, Israeli troops would begin to withdraw from Gaza, and displaced Palestinian civilians would be allowed to return to their homes in the north of the strip.

Another big obstacle is whether Israel remains in control of the Gaza-Egypt border - a red line for Hamas and for Egypt.

Blinken travelled onward to Egypt and Qatar yesterday for further negotiations after meetings in Israel on Monday. In Egypt he met the president, Gen Abdel Fatah al-Sisi.

After the meeting, Sisi said: "The ceasefire in Gaza must be the beginning of broader international recognition of the Palestinian state and the implementation of the two-state solution, as this is the basic guarantor of stability in the region."

In Qatar, Blinken said "time is of the essence" in securing a ceasefire deal. "This needs to get done, and it needs to get done in the days ahead,

'Ceasefire must mean broader recognition of the Palestinian state'

Abdel Fatah al-Sisi
Egypt's president

'Unsettling for us all' India's doctors fearful after hospital murder

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On thin ice Hungry polar bears entering Arctic towns

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Yoram
MetzgerAbraham
MunderChaim
PeriAlexander
DancyYagev
BuchshtabNadav
Popplewell

and we will do everything possible to get it across the finish line," he said.

His trip is part of intense new international efforts to broker a ceasefire after the assassination of a top Hezbollah commander in Lebanon and of Hamas's political chief, Ismail Haniyeh, in Iran. Tehran and the Lebanese militia threatened retaliatory action.

A spokesperson for Iran's Revolutionary Guards, Alimohammad Naini, told reporters yesterday there could be a long wait for Iranian retaliation against Israel.

For all parties, a cessation of hostilities in Gaza is the best way to cool regional tensions. Along with other armed groups in Iran's "axis of resistance" across Syria, Iraq and Yemen, Hezbollah has said it will stop attacking Israel and US assets in the region when the war in Gaza ends.

About 250 Israelis and foreigners were taken hostage on 7 October in the Hamas attack, according to Israeli tallies. In Gaza, 40,200 people have been killed in Israel's ensuing war, the health ministry in the territory says.

During a ceasefire in November, 105 Israeli hostages were released in exchange for 240 Palestinian women and children held in Israel's jails, but the truce broke down after a week.

Since then, at least 43 hostages are believed to have died in captivity, according to official Israeli estimates, including three mistakenly shot dead by IDF soldiers in December, plus Sahar Baruch, killed in a failed rescue. Hamas has claimed several hostages died due to Israeli bombings.

The Israeli military has rescued seven hostages in three raids. In June, 274 people were killed in an operation at the Nuseirat refugee camp which freed four hostages, according to Palestinian medics.

ICJ ruling Countries supplying oil for war 'risk complicity in genocide'

Nina Lakhani and Ajit Niranjani

Israeli tanks, jets and bulldozers bombarding Gaza and razing homes in the occupied West Bank are being supplied with fuel by an increasing number of countries that are signed up to the Geneva and genocide conventions, new research suggests, which legal experts warn could make them complicit in serious crimes against the Palestinian people.

Four tankers of American jet fuel have been shipped to Israel since the start of its aerial bombardment of Gaza in October. Three shipments departed from Texas after the landmark international court of justice (ICJ) ruling on 26 January ordered Israel to prevent genocidal acts in Gaza. The ruling reminded states that under the genocide convention they have a "common interest to ensure the prevention, suppression and punishment of genocide".

Overall, almost 80% of the jet fuel, diesel and other refined petroleum products supplied to Israel by the US over the past nine months was shipped after the January ruling, according to the new research commissioned by the non-profit Oil Change International and shared exclusively with the Guardian.

Researchers analysed shipping logs, satellite images and other open-source industry data to track 65 oil and fuel shipments to Israel between 21 October last year and 12 July.

It suggests Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Gabon, Nigeria, Brazil and, most recently, the Republic of the Congo and Italy have supplied 4.1m tonnes of crude oil to Israel, with almost half shipped since the ICJ ruling. An estimated two-thirds of crude came from investor-owned and private oil companies, according to the research, to be refined by Israel for domestic, industrial and military use.

Israel relies heavily on crude oil and refined petroleum imports to run its fleet of fighter jets, tanks and other military vehicles and operations.

In response to the findings, the UN and other international law experts called for an energy embargo - and an investigation into any oil and fuels shipped to Israel that have been used to aid acts of alleged genocide and other serious international crimes.

"After the 26 January ICJ ruling, states cannot claim they did not

know what they were risking to partake in," said Francesca Albanese, the UN special rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territory, adding that under international law, states have obligations to prevent genocide and respect and ensure respect for the Geneva conventions.

Brazil, where President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has been one of the sharpest critics of Israel, accounts for 9% of the total crude oil supplied to Israel in the past nine months. One of the shipments departed in February after the interim ICJ ruling. An additional tanker of fuel oil, used mostly for heating and powering generators, set sail in April. Lula withdrew Brazil's ambassador to Israel, but has not issued a ban on oil exports.

A spokesperson for the president's office said fuel trades were carried out directly by the private sector according to market rules. "Although the government's stance on Israel's current military action in Gaza is well known, Brazil's traditional position on sanctions is to not apply or support them unilaterally," they said.

Azerbaijan, the largest supplier of crude to Israel since October, will host the 29th UN climate summit in November, followed by Brazil in 2025.

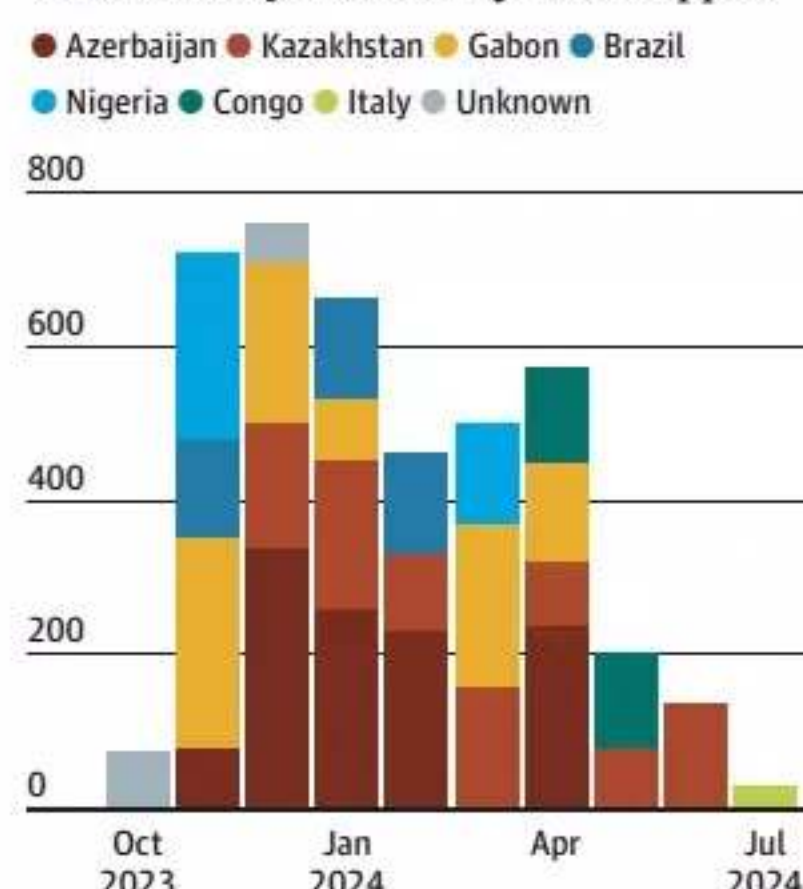
A spokesperson for the Israeli ministry of foreign affairs said the charges of genocide are "false, outrageous and morally repugnant". They added: "[Hamas] sought to perpetrate genocide on October 7 in the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust, [and] is directly responsible for the suffering of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Israel remains steadfast in its commitment to international law, targeting its military actions solely against Hamas and its allied terrorist groups."

In Europe, companies in Italy, Greece and Albania appear to have supplied refined petroleum products to Israel since the ICJ ruling. Last month, Israel also received crude from Italy. A spokesperson said the Italian government had "no information" about the recent shipments.

The governments of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Nigeria, Gabon and the Republic of the Congo did not respond to requests for comment, and nor did Greece, Albania or the US.

Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Gabon have shipped the most crude oil to Israel

Kilotonnes of crude oil by date shipped



Source: Oil Change International, Data Desk analysis



▲ Ukrainian soldiers during a mortar fire in Donetsk. Volodymyr Zelenskiy described the situation there as 'difficult' PHOTOGRAPH: DIEGO HERRERA CARCEDO/GETTY

Fighting fierce as Ukraine pushes deeper into Russia

Luke Harding
Dan Sabbagh
Kyiv

Fierce fighting continued inside Russia yesterday as Ukrainian troops tried to seize more territory and used kamikaze drones to blow up a Russian pontoon bridge across a strategic river crossing.

Satellite images showed that the temporary bridge had disappeared and there were large puffs of grey smoke. Russian forces built the pontoon between the villages of Zvanov and Glushkovo after Ukrainian missiles destroyed three bridges across the Seym River.

Ukrainian forces are trying to expand their bridgehead in the Kursk region, after a surprise incursion two weeks ago. An estimated 2,000 to 3,000 Russian conscripts are now stuck in a pocket south of the river in the Glushkovsky district. Some civilians have escaped on small boats. Yesterday, the Ukrainian army reportedly captured another Russian village, Martynovka. Video emerged of Ukrainian soldiers taking part in a firefight in the hamlet of Malaya Loknya, on part of the frontline. They fired from a Marder infantry fighting vehicle at Russian soldiers. Several houses were in flames.

Speaking on Monday, Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said his forces controlled more than 1,250 sq km of "enemy territory", in and around the Russian border town of Sudzha. The buffer zone now includes 92 settlements, seized as part of what he said was a "defensive operation".

Zelenskiy acknowledged that he had not briefed close allies about the incursion in advance. He said "many representatives of the international community" would have dismissed the plan as "unrealistic".

While Ukraine has made rapid progress in Kursk oblast, the Russian

army has been going steadily forward across eastern Ukraine. Yesterday the Kremlin confirmed it had seized Niu-York, a town that has been fought over since 2014. Another battle was happening in Hrodivka, a village close to the Ukrainian city of Pokrovsk in Donetsk province, a Russian target and hub for Ukraine's military.

Zelenskiy admitted the situation in Donetsk was "difficult".

Matthew Savill, the director of military sciences at the defence thinktank RUSI in London, said it was too early to say whether Ukraine's Kursk attack was a brilliant stratagem or a disastrous error. Russian media said Vladimir Putin had ordered his generals to remove Ukrainian troops by 1 October.

Savill estimated Kyiv had committed about 8,000 battle-hardened troops, drawn from 12 brigades. Some units have reportedly been transferred from parts of the frontline in the east where Ukraine is under massive Russian pressure.

"It isn't a vast counteroffensive and it isn't a raid. It sits somewhere in between," Savill said. "The Kursk operation is good for Ukrainian morale, changes the narrative and brings tactical advantages." But he cautioned: "It has not had a significant operational impact in terms of Russia's broader campaign. And Ukraine can ill afford to suffer casualties."

Savill said Zelenskiy's decision not to brief the White House and the UK government was understandable. The failure of Ukraine's counteroffensive in 2023 was in part down to leaks, he said, adding: "I think the Ukrainians wanted to present their latest operation as a fait accompli. It changes the debate about escalation and the use inside Russia of [western] long-range weapons."

Ukraine's parliament voted to ban the Russian-linked Ukrainian Orthodox church. Zelenskiy said it would boost "spiritual independence".

False claims spread on social media in Spain after fatal stabbing of boy, 11

Ashifa Kassam
Madrid

The fatal stabbing of an 11-year-old as he played football with friends has put misinformation in the spotlight in Spain after false claims were spread on social media that the suspect was of north African origin or an unaccompanied minor seeking asylum.

The attack took place on Sunday morning when the child, named by his family as Mateo, was among several children playing football at a sports centre in the small town of Mocejón in the centre of the country. A man with a hood pulled over his head and a scarf concealing his face ran on to the field wielding a sharp object.

The victim's family later suggested the attack was random, saying the man first approached another group of young people on the field who managed to slip away. He then caught Mateo, who was with two friends, reportedly stabbing him more than 10 times before fleeing the scene.

After police combed the area by land and air surveillance in an operation that stretched more than 30 hours, a 20-year-old man was arrested at his father's house in Mocejón in connection with the crime.

Between the attack and the arrest, posts spread on social media making false assertions that the suspect was of North African origin or an unaccompanied minor seeking asylum, echoing how the murders in the English town of Southport were used to stoke anti-immigration tensions.

'This has nothing to do with race or ideology. Migrants here are peaceful'

Asell Sánchez
Family representative

As misinformation about the attacker's identity proliferated online, the family of the victim pleaded with people to let the police do their jobs. Asell Sánchez, a relative acting as a spokesperson for the family, told reporters: "This has nothing to do with race or ideology. They're talking about migrants who have come to the hotel, these are peaceful people who are getting on with their lives, it has nothing to do with this."

Instead he pointed to evidence suggesting the assailant had entered the sports centre via a broken back door, suggesting the attack had been carried out by someone who knew their way round the area.

The misleading posts continued to rack up views even as police sources made it clear in the Spanish media that they had ruled out any jihadist connection to the murder.

Sánchez later broke down in tears as he recounted how the misinformation had led to him becoming the target of online attacks.

"It's been horrible," he told the broadcaster Cope. "I did this out of love for my family and I'm receiving criticism on social media, they're attacking me."

A source with the hate crimes unit of Spain's public prosecutor said they were looking into several of the messages that had been disseminated and which had sought to criminalise foreigners.

Yesterday, a day after Spanish media broadcast images that appeared to show a young white man being arrested in connection with the crime, Milagros Tolón, the Spanish government's representative in Castilla-La Mancha, highlighted how misinformation had sought to play on people's emotions in a case that had gripped Spain.

Tolón blasted those who had knowingly spread false claims. She described them as "sowers of hatred who had taken advantage of human suffering, such as the death of an 11-year-old child, to vent all their hatred on social media".



◀ **Maria Branyas Morera**, who was born in the US in 1907, celebrating her 117th birthday on 4 March at the nursing home where she lived in Spain

PHOTOGRAPH: RESIDENCIA SANTA MARIA DEL TURA/REUTERS

Maria Branyas Morera, the world's oldest person, dies at age of 117

Agence France-Presse

The world's oldest person, Maria Branyas Morera, who was born in the US in 1907 and lived through two pandemics and two world wars, has died in Spain at the age of 117, her family said yesterday.

"Maria Branyas has left us. She died as she wished: in her sleep, peacefully and without pain," her family wrote on her account on X.

"We will always remember her for her advice and her kindness."

Branyas, who had lived for the past two decades in the Residència Santa Maria del Tura nursing home in the city of Olot in north-eastern Spain, had said in a post on the account run by her family that she felt weak.

She added: "The time is near. Don't cry. I don't like tears. And above all, don't suffer for me. Wherever I go, I will be happy."

Guinness World Records had officially acknowledged Branyas's status

as the world's oldest person in January 2023 after the death, aged 118, of the French nun Lucile Randon.

The oldest living person now is Japan's Tomiko Itooka, who is 116, according to the US Gerontology Research Group.

Branyas, who lived through the 1918 flu pandemic, the first and second world wars and Spain's civil war, got Covid-19 in 2020, just weeks after her 113th birthday. She was confined to her room at the home but made a full recovery.

Her daughter Rosa Moret once attributed her mother's longevity to genetics. "She has never gone to the hospital. She has never broken any bones. She is fine. She has no pain," she told Catalan television in 2023.

Suspected serial killer escapes from police cell in Nairobi

Carlos Mureithi
Nairobi

A Kenyan man who police claim had confessed to murdering and dismembering 42 women escaped from a Nairobi jail cell yesterday, police said.

Collins Khalusha, 33, was described by police as a "vampire, a psychopath" when he was arrested in July after the discovery of bodies at an abandoned quarry in the capital.

Police said the officer in charge and the canteen manager at Gigiri police station realised Khalusha and 12 other inmates were missing when

they went to serve them breakfast at 5am. Khalusha and the other inmates had cut through wire mesh in their cells and climbed a perimeter wall, according to police.

Mohamed Amin, the head of the directorate of criminal investigations, said the escape was "unfortunate". "This was a high-value suspect who was to face serious charges. We are investigating the incident and will take action accordingly," he added.

According to police, Khalusha had confessed to killing 42 women over

the past two years and throwing their bodies into the quarry. At least 10 sacks with body parts were removed from the location, police said.

But when Khalusha appeared in court last month, his lawyer, John



▶ **Collins Khalusha**, right, appeared at a hearing in Nairobi on Friday

Ndegwa, said his client had been tortured into making a confession.

The discovery of the bodies at the quarry located just 100 metres from a police station brought renewed attention to Kenya's police, who have long been accused by rights groups of carrying out unlawful killings.

Human rights organisations as well as the independent police oversight authority have said they are investigating the quarry deaths.

The escape comes six months after Kevin Kangethe, a Kenyan wanted in the US for murder, escaped from another Nairobi police station. Police rearrested him a few days later.

'It's unsettling' Indian doctor's murder leaves peers feeling vulnerable at work

Amrit Dhillon
Delhi

On Monday, Indians celebrated the Hindu festival of Raksha Bandhan, marking the bond between brother and sister. Sisters tie a "rakhi", or bracelet, around the wrists of their brothers as a symbol of love for which the brothers in turn pledge to protect them from harm.

This year, the rakhi tradition angered Dr Sumita Banerjee, a third-year student at Lady Hardinge medical college in the Indian capital, Delhi, because of the timing

- India is still shaken by the rape and murder of a 31-year-old doctor on 9 August at a hospital in Kolkata.

The man who has been arrested, Sanjoy Roy, was a civic volunteer with the police who helped patients. "What hypocrisy," said Banerjee. "These men pledge to protect their sisters but rape women. Can we stop these brother-sister rituals and just strive for a day when Indian men respect not only their sisters but *all* women."

The discovery of the doctor's brutalised body in a seminar room at RG Kar hospital, where she had gone to take a break, has outraged Indians. Doctors across the country have held protests and refused to see non-emergency patients.

For female doctors, the crime has spawned a new fear. Their brains were already wired to make careful decisions about what to wear depending on where they were going and to avoid being out late alone. But at work, many felt they could let their guard down.

"I'd stride into hospital at 2am or 3am and think nothing of it. My white coat was like a circle of protection around me. Now that sense of safety has gone," said Dr Rooma Sinha, a gynaecologist at Apollo hospital in Hyderabad.

Her colleague at the Apollo branch in Bangalore, Dr Preeti Shetty, also a gynaecologist, said female doctors were deeply disturbed by the crime. "We have

all done night shifts, responded to calls at every hour of the day, and gone off for deliveries at night as totally routine things. To think that such a hideous thing could happen during our normal routine is very unsettling," said Shetty.

In response, the government yesterday announced a 25% increase in security personnel at all government hospitals, along with marshals to handle extreme situations. Separately, India's supreme court ordered the creation of a national taskforce of doctors to make recommendations on safety.

A senior resident at Safdarjung hospital in Delhi, who did not want to be named, said she felt nervous about going back to night shifts

once the strike was over. "It's weird but being out in the open on the street actually feels safer than a seminar room in a hospital," she said. Dr Subashini Venkatesh, a general physician with Apollo in Chennai, has already started behaving differently with her staff.

"I have an intern working with me and I'm asking: 'Where have you parked your car, is it well-lit? Let me know when you have reached your room.' This is totally new," she said. Sinha said she appreciated the public outrage over a doctor being murdered but said no distinctions should be made.

"Yes, I know doctors serve the public but so do other women - women working nights in call centres or as software engineers. Women should feel safe in *all* workplaces," she said.

The investigation is being handled by the Central Bureau of Investigation, which took over from the Kolkata police after the parents of the murdered doctor expressed doubts about their objectivity.

'All I can do is get justice' Father pays tribute to his dead daughter

Amrit Dhillon

"We raised her with a lot of hardship," the father of the trainee doctor murdered during a rest break at a Kolkata hospital has said. "She worked extremely hard to become a doctor. All she did was study, study, study."

"All our dreams have been shattered in one night. We sent her to work and the hospital gave us her body. It's all finished for us."

He told the Guardian by phone: "My daughter isn't coming back. I'm never going to hear her voice or laugh. All I can do now is concentrate on getting her justice."

The rape and murder of the doctor at RG Kar hospital in Kolkata on 9 August, and subsequent handling of the case by the authorities, has led to protests and strikes by doctors across India.

Her father, who cannot be named under an Indian law that protects the identity of the dead woman, said a career in medicine was all his only child had ever wanted. The 31-year-old had beaten the odds to qualify for one of about 107,000 places in India's medical colleges, which more than a million aspiring



Medical professionals protest amid a nationwide strike to condemn the rape and murder of a young medic from Kolkata at a Bangalore hospital this month

PHOTOGRAPH: IDREES MOHAMMED/AFP

doctors compete for every year. She won a place at College of Medicine & JNM hospital in Kalyani in her home state of West Bengal.

Her parents financed her dream with the precarious income her father earned as a tailor.

Remembering the day she confided in him that she wanted to become a doctor, his voice broke. "She said: 'Papa, it's a good thing to become a doctor and help others. What do you think?' I said: 'OK, do it. We'll help you.' And look what happened."

Her ambition drove him to expand his tailoring business and the family's finances improved to the point where, when his daughter fretted about safety on the hour-long bus ride between the hospital and their home in a crowded Kolkata suburb, he was able to

borrow the money to buy her a car. "At first, she told me to wait, she said we couldn't manage the EMIs [monthly instalments] and she didn't want to overburden us. But then she found the bus ride so tiring after a long shift that she agreed to the car," said the father.

Although they remained in the same lower middle-class suburb where she grew up, and where everyone respected her as a local girl made good, her parents had recently renovated the house. The brass nameplate bore her name, not theirs, proudly prefixed by "Dr".

The sense of disbelief in the neighbourhood has not faded since the news spread from house to house that "their" doctor's bright day was done. The location of this attack - in the hospital where she worked, which she and her

family assumed was safe - and her public service as a doctor working a 36-hour shift have added to the public outrage over the crime.

The father said: "Like all parents, we worried about her safety but only while she was travelling. The moment she reached the hospital, we relaxed. She was safe. It's like when we used to drop her off at school - once she was inside the gate, you feel she is safe."

In a post on X, the head of the Indian Medical Association, Dr RV Asokan, expressed anguish at the murder, saying "we failed her in life but did not fail her in death" - a reference to the protests, outcry and doctors' strikes that have rocked the country since her body was discovered.

Her colleagues and neighbours describe a dedicated young doctor

who wanted to pay off her parents' debts and give them a comfortable life after their sacrifices to help her.

One of her former teachers, Arnab Biswas, said that unlike many young people who chose medicine for its earning potential, she was "old school", treating it as a vocation. Having witnessed Covid-19 patients gasping for breath, she selected respiratory medicine when it came to choosing a medical specialism.

Her parents are broken. A neighbour said the mother told her: "She was my only child. We worked hard to make her a doctor. I will never be happy again."

Neighbours - who consulted her over every ailment - are yearning to help the family in some way. "The girl has gone now," said one. "But we'll stand by her parents."

▼ Polar bears in Hudson Bay, north-east Canada. The climate crisis is affecting habitat and food sources

PHOTOGRAPH: OLIVIER MORIN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



'It'll get worse' Climate crisis puts polar bears in conflict with people

Leyland Cecco
Toronto

John Ussak was tending to his fishing nets outside the Arctic hamlet of Rankin Inlet when a friend warned that a polar bear had been spotted in the area.

The next day, Ussak's wife spotted the lone bear nearly a mile from their nets. Worried the bear was stalking a popular summer fishing spot, Ussak approached it and fired a volley of warning shots. But the predator seemed unfazed.

"It took 20 shots before it thought about leaving," he said. "I've never seen that before." Days later, in another part of Nunavut, two polar bears killed a radar technician in a rare attack.

The fatal encounter and sightings in unusual locations foreshadow what experts say is a looming clash between polar bears and northern communities as climate change disrupts the bears' habitat and food sources.

The deadly attack on 7 August happened on Brevoort Island, the site of a North American air-defence radar station. Nasittuq, the company operating the station, says employees killed one of the bears involved in the attack.

Despite an estimated 17,000 polar bears in Canada, fatal encounters are rare. But the attack has caused anxiety in a region familiar with polar bears.

"When I heard about what happened to that technician, I was shocked," said Ussak. Only days after encountering the bear in early

August, Ussak spotted a mother and her cub in the same area. He and a friend scared them away.

"We hardly used to see polar bears here in the past. But now we've had at least two in the last few weeks. It feels like there's more bears up in that area - and they don't seem afraid of people."

Andrew Derocher, a professor of biology at the University of Alberta, says the mauling at Brevoort Island was "unusual" given the location and the fact that two bears were involved. While details are scarce, he suspects it was

17,000

The estimated number of polar bears in Canada. Despite this, fatal encounters with humans are rare

probably a "wrong place, wrong time" encounter.

Sea ice will play a critical role in polar bears' prospects. Some bear populations faced ice cover at near-record lows this summer, while others such as the western Hudson Bay population had excellent coverage. But ice cover isn't enough: across swathes of the bay, the ice was thick but lacked ridges and snow cover, meaning it was a poor breeding site for ringed seals, a top polar bear prey. Shifts in seal populations will put immense pressure on bears to find food.

"Back in the 1980s, polar bears would look like giant, fat sausages lying on the beach in the summer. But now, we're seeing a population that is much leaner overall. And I suspect as food becomes more of a challenge ... they'll start entering [human] communities. Are those communities ready? Absolutely not," said Derocher.

"These encounters are going to increase over time and it's going to get a lot worse. But then it's going to get better because, as sad as it is, the population will start to disappear."

Venezuelan cycling star found dead in Las Vegas flat

Edward Helmore

The five-time Olympian Daniela Larreal Chirinos was found dead inside her Las Vegas apartment after the former cyclist choked to death on her food, police said yesterday.

The 50-year-old's body was found after she failed to show up at the hotel where she worked, Fox Sports reported.

Larreal was one of Venezuela's best-known athletes, having competed in Olympic cycling competitions in Barcelona in 1992, Atlanta in 1996, Sydney in 2000, Athens in 2004 and London in 2012.

She never medalled at the Olympics, but she won a pair of golds at the Central American and Caribbean Games in San Salvador in 2002. A year later she won two silver medals at the Pan American Games in Chile.

Larreal was active in Venezuelan politics and was a critic of the strongman ruler Hugo Chávez. When Nicolás Maduro came to power in 2013, she called his presidency a dictatorship and was forced into exile and banned from entering Venezuela.

She in later years lived in Miami before moving to Las Vegas to work in a hotel as a food server.

Larreal was declared missing on Friday after failing to turn up for work. She was found dead at her apartment four days later.

The local medical examiner was still investigating the cause and method of her death as of yesterday. But police reportedly found solid food remains in her windpipe, leading them to suspect she had died from asphyxiation.



▲ Daniela Larreal Chirinos, 50, competed in five Olympic Games

Health officials urge solidarity over African mpox outbreak

Kaamil Ahmed

African health officials appealed to the international community yesterday not to impose travel bans on countries dealing with an outbreak of mpox, but instead to support the rollout of testing and vaccinations.

There have been about 1,400 cases and 24 deaths linked to a new variant



▲ A mother in the DRC holds her infant child who survived mpox

of mpox over the past week, according to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Don't punish Africa," said the Africa CDC's head, Jean Kaseya. "We need solidarity. We need you to provide appropriate support. This vaccine is expensive."

"I clearly request our partners to stop thinking about travel bans that will bring us back to the unfair treatment from the Covid period and not help the world to move forward."

Kaseya said he hoped vaccines would soon arrive in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the source of an outbreak that has spread to at least three other countries.

He said there had been collaboration between countries and health organisations but that he would not be satisfied with progress in tackling the outbreak until testing networks had been established. Richer nations could help in expanding testing and procuring vaccines, he added.

He said there had been talks with the vaccine manufacturer Bavarian Nordic to allow local production, which would help to lower the cost.

The company has told Africa CDC it could provide 2m doses this year by switching focus to mpox rather than other vaccines.

The DRC's health minister, Roger Kamba, said on Monday that 16,700

cases and 570 deaths had been recorded this year.

Africa CDC said there needed to be more education about the spread of the disease, especially to ensure people knew that it was not only spread through sexual contact, as many believed. It can spread through close contact with an infected person.

Gay and bisexual men accounted for the majority of cases in the global outbreak in 2022, but children have accounted for 70% of cases in the DRC during latest outbreak.

Most cases of mpox are in the DRC, but the clade 1b variant has also been detected in Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda.

'Now it's ours' Descendants of slaves lay claim to former plantation HQ in Brazil

Tiago Rogero
Pinheiral

Two hundred years ago, the São José do Pinheiro coffee plantation farm was one of the most opulent estates in Brazil. Even for the country that received the highest number of kidnapped Africans during the transatlantic slave trade, the property, 75 miles away from Rio de Janeiro, was one of a kind.

About 500 people – an unusually big workforce even by Brazilian standards – were enslaved by one of Brazil's richest men, José de Souza Breves, who owned eight other estates in the region.

Pinheiro was his headquarters, and it stood out for its lavishness, with a 20-room palace filled with artworks and a 48-bed hospital for the enslaved workers – to prevent productivity problems due to sickness or injuries.

Now, Pinheiral, a town of 24,000 people named after the farm, occupies the area where it once stood. Remnants of the palace have become a public space named the Park of the Ruins and what was the headquarters of a slaveholding empire has been claimed by descendants of those who were once forced to work there.

"We fought hard to reclaim a land that once belonged to a slaver, but now it's ours," said Cíntia Helena da Silva, 34, whose ancestors were enslaved at Pinheiro. Da Silva's family is part of the Jongo de Pinheiral group, which, through an agreement with the town hall, took control of the space in 2016. The group recently secured funding from the Brazilian government to transform the Park of the Ruins into a museum and school of *jongo*, an Afro-Brazilian tradition that mixes music, dance, spirituality and storytelling.

The group recently organised a festival featuring 18 *jongo* groups at Pinheiro on the same vast, flat terrain where coffee beans had been spread out to dry under the sun in the 1800s.



▲ Cíntia da Silva takes part in a Jongo, a dance celebrating Afro-Brazilian culture PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAN LIMA/THE GUARDIAN



The *jongueiros* formed a circle led by Maria de Fátima da Silveira Santos, 68, known as Mestre Fatinha: two people played the drums, while Mestre Fatinha sang a *ponto*, which was then followed by everyone. The lyrics can range from everyday themes ("Keep my name out of your mouth") to more political ones that directly mention

slavery: "I was sleeping, [and the drum] called me/Get up, people, for captivity is over."

The performances – which can take hours and sometimes all night – usually involve just two people at a time, most often a man and a woman, who dance in the ring. There is no choreography; everyone dances as they wish.

'Jongo was a way of communication for black people, in politics and worship'

Maria de Fátima da Silveira Santos
Community leader



Although it seems like just a dance, it has always involved much more, said Mestre Fatinha. "*Jongo* was a way of communication for black people. They engaged in politics, courted each other, worshipped the *orixás* [deities from the Afro-Brazilian religion Candomblé]. Everything happened in a *jongo* circle," she said.

Serious issues could be discussed in songs, and even revolts could be organised in coded messages right under the eyes of the enslavers.

According to Rafael Galante, a historian and ethnomusicologist, the word *jongo* originates from the Bantu language family, to which most of the Africans brought to Brazil in the 19th century belonged.

Though it incorporates elements found in some central African cultures, *jongo* is a uniquely Brazilian phenomenon, the result of the "diasporic experience", Galante said, adding: "It's the best first-person narrative we have of the enslaved people's perspective on slavery."

Mestre Fatinha agrees: "Our *jongo* is the same as it was during the time of the plantation, and it has been passed down from generation to generation."

Nowadays, it has also taken on a new role, she said: "It's a banner for our struggle as black people ... Now we use it to be present at spaces like schools and universities, to talk about our traditions ourselves."

Jongo is practiced by at least 14 traditional communities in the Brazilian south-east. Many of these are remnants of *quilombos*, another Bantu-origin word that, during Brazil's 350 years of slavery, referred to communities established by escaped enslaved people. Although *jongo* is not a religion, it involves there is spirituality involved. Some songs refer to the *orixás* and Catholic figures including Saint Benedict the African. "We always reference our ancestors because, if it weren't for them, we wouldn't be here ... We dance in the memory of them," said Mestre Fatinha who, along with the musician and artistic director Marcos André Carvalho, is leading the project to transform the Pinheiro estate's ruins into a memorial for black people.

In addition to the museum and the *jongo* school, the plans include a restaurant, a visitor centre and a library. The entire project is budgeted at 5m reais (£700,000), but for now the Brazilian government has only approved 300,000 reais for the development of an executive project. Construction is not expected to start until next year.

"The Pinheiro estate was once one of the greatest symbols of Brazilian slavery's opulence," said Galante. "And the people who survived all that violence are now claiming that space."

Woman, 99, loses appeal over role in 10,505 Nazi murders

Associated Press

A German court yesterday rejected an appeal by a 99-year-old woman who was convicted of being an accessory to 10,505 murders during her role as a secretary to the SS commander of the Nazis' Stutthof concentration camp during the second world war.

The federal court of justice upheld



▲ Irmgard Furchner was a secretary in the Stutthof concentration camp

the conviction of Irmgard Furchner, who was given a two-year suspended sentence in December 2022 by a state court in Itzehoe, northern Germany.

She was accused of being part of the apparatus that helped the camp near Danzig, now the Polish city of Gdańsk, function. She was convicted of being an accessory to murder in 10,505 cases and an accessory to attempted murder in five cases.

At a hearing last month, Furchner's lawyers cast doubt on whether she was an accessory to crimes and whether she had truly been aware of what was happening at Stutthof.

The Itzehoe court said judges were convinced that Furchner knew and,

through her work as a stenographer in the commandant's office, "deliberately supported the fact that 10,505 prisoners were cruelly killed by gasings, by hostile conditions in the camp", by transportation to the Auschwitz death camp and by being sent on death marches.

Prosecutors said in the original proceedings that Furchner's trial may be the last of its kind. However, a special federal prosecutors' office in Ludwigsburg investigating Nazi-era war crimes has said three cases are pending in Germany. With suspects now at an advanced age, their fitness to stand trial has been questioned.

The Furchner case is one of several

that built on a precedent established in 2011 with the conviction of the former Ohio car factory worker John Demjanjuk as an accessory to murder on allegations that he served as a guard at the Sobibor death camp. He denied the allegations but died before his appeal could be heard.

German courts previously required prosecutors to justify charges by presenting evidence of a former guard's participation in a specific killing.

Stutthof was a collection point for Jews and non-Jewish Poles removed from Danzig. Later, forced labourers were sent there to serve sentences and often died. More than 60,000 people were killed at the camp.



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Start Date: / Expiry Date: /

G0824E

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Date

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giftaid it

¹The Food Foundation Food Insecurity Tracking 2024.

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Business

Government urged to end water bill 'postcode lottery'

Alex Lawson

Ministers are under pressure to end the "postcode lottery" on water by introducing a single social tariff for households on low incomes amid fresh signs that consumers are struggling to keep up with their bills.

Water companies in England and Wales offer their own social tariffs, providing discounts to consumers under pressure. However, some are far more generous than others, leaving vast disparities in how much consumers pay in different regions.

Campaigners have argued that a central pot of funding - contributed to by all water companies - would help a greater number of people.

In a letter to the minister for water and flooding, Emma Hardy, seen by the Guardian, 14 charities said the government had a "huge opportunity" to support people in poverty

with their water costs. They wrote: "A single water social tariff would be a simple way to provide fair and consistent support for people in financial hardship, helping ensure more people are able to access the water they need without having to make extreme sacrifices."

The Guardian reported last year that officials had been positive about the idea but later backed away from it after examining the issue in detail.

It is understood that water industry representatives have raised the idea with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and discussions are ongoing.

The industry has faced widespread criticism over sewage dumping, debt levels, executive pay and underinvestment.

Sources said some companies had resisted a single social tariff as it would mean they were in effect subsidising firms in other regions that needed to make larger investments.

Research conducted by YouGov for the charity Independent Age found that 38% of people over 65 in England who were on household incomes below £15,000 found it a struggle to keep up with their water bills. In Wales, the figure was 29%.

Campaigners had hoped a uniform social tariff could be devised before the next water industry price review period, which runs from 2025 to 2030.

However, submissions have already been made for the review and last month the industry regulator, Ofwat, provisionally said average water bills would rise by 21% over the next five years from April.

Independent Age's chief executive, Joanna Elson, said: "We're

21%

Average provisional increase in water bills in England and Wales over the next five years from April

urging the government to take swift action to end the unfair postcode lottery by introducing a single social tariff for England and Wales."

She added: "An address shouldn't impact how much support someone in financial hardship receives towards their water bill."

Separately, research by Citizens Advice found up to a quarter of the population fear they could be forced to turn off their heating and hot water this winter due to rising energy bills.

The proportion who said they would need to take such action increased to 31% for households with children and 39% for people on a low income, the survey found.

The energy regulator, Ofgem, is expected to say on Friday that energy bills across Great Britain will rise by 9% from October to an average of £1,714 a year.

A Defra spokesperson said: "We expect water companies to have robust support in place for customers who are struggling to pay their bills, including bill discount schemes and financial support plans."

"For too long, investment has not kept pace with the challenges of an ageing infrastructure system, a rapidly growing population, and climate change. It is not fair that customers should suffer the consequences of years of mismanagement."



▲ Dominic Chappell bought BHS for £1 via his Retail Acquisitions group

Two former BHS directors ordered to pay creditors £110m

Sarah Butler

Two former bosses of the collapsed department store chain BHS have been ordered to pay £110m to creditors in relation to breaching their corporate duties.

The ruling against Dominic Chappell, the former chief executive of BHS whose Retail Acquisitions team bought the chain for £1 from Philip Green in 2015, and his former colleague Lennart Henningson comes eight years after the retailer collapsed into administration owing creditors, including its pension fund, more than £1bn.

The compensation, which will ultimately go to creditors if successfully collected, relates to the directors breaching their fiduciary duties by continuing to trade rather than putting BHS into an insolvency process, thus failing to promote the success of the company.

Chappell, the thrice-bankrupt leader of Retail Acquisitions, did not appear at a hearing in June or send a representative. The judge ruled against him, saying there was "no real prospect of defending any of the claims against him".

FRP Advisory, the firm acting as liquidator to BHS, brought the case against the directors on behalf of creditors. It said the total amount due from directors, for which they are jointly liable, was likely to be £150m as a result of interest and Henningson's failure to accept a timely settlement triggering penalties.

Robin Henry, the head of dispute resolution services at the law firm Collyer Bristow, said: "Liquidators have obtained a much larger judgment against the directors of BHS by using the novel claim of trading misfeasance than they did from their wrongful trading claim."

"This opens up a whole new avenue for recovering assets from directors of insolvent companies and trading misfeasance is an area of potential liability which company directors now need to be aware of."

Chappell did not respond to a request for comment.

Tesla to get lowest EU tariff on its Chinese made EVs

Jennifer Rankin Brussels
Lisa O'Carroll

Tesla will face a 9% levy on its Chinese-made cars exported to the EU, the European Commission has said, as it issued an update on its sweeping investigation into Beijing's "unfair" subsidies on electric vehicles.

The tariff on Tesla - far lower than the 21.3% average on companies that cooperated with the EU investigation and 36.3% on those that did not - came after the California-based firm requested individual treatment as part of the Brussels inquiry.

The levies - far lower than the 100% tariffs imposed by the US - come on top of the EU's existing 10% duty on EVs from China.

EU officials visited Tesla's Shanghai operations in June and said yesterday that it had benefited from Chinese state subsidies, mainly below-cost batteries, but also cheap land and grants for exporters.

The 9% tariff will apply by 31 October at the latest, subject to approval from EU member states.

The Tesla decision was revealed as the commission announced modest downward tweaks to the tariff rates on Chinese-made EVs after technical



▲ A Tesla store in Hong Kong. The tariff came after an EU inquiry into Beijing's EV subsidies PHOTOGRAPH: BOB HENRY/ALAMY

talks with the companies. Under the latest proposals, China's BYD, which vies with Tesla for the title of the world's largest producer of electric vehicles, will face a 17% tariff; Geely 19.3% and SAIC 36.3%.

The three rates have been revised

9%

The new reduced tariff on Tesla, far lower than the 21.3% average on firms that cooperated with the EU

downwards since provisional measures were published in June and could be changed again.

EU officials also announced yesterday that no company would have to pay provisional tariffs before the likely entry into force by October.

Companies are being spared interim duties because EU officials have concluded that European car-makers face "the threat of injury" rather than actual harm, such as factory closures and job losses.

An EU official said if nothing was

done, the growth of subsidy-powered Chinese EV exports would soon lead to "material injury" for EU producers, adding: "Our legislation allows us to act before people are fired and factories are shut down."

The Kiel Institute for the World Economy thinktank estimated earlier this year that China's aid to EVs amounted to about \$5.6bn (£4.3bn) in 2022 when direct payments to manufacturers were phased out.

By far the biggest beneficiary was BYD, which received \$3.7bn.

Business view

Nils Pratley



Asda and Morrisons buyouts were old-fashioned games of leverage and debt gymnastics

Private equity sometimes gets “a bad rap” and generally makes its returns by growing businesses rather than via “financial engineering”, opined Andrew Higginson, then chairman of the supermarket chain Morrisons, when his board agreed to sell to the buyout firm Clayton Dubilier & Rice for £7bn in 2021. Really?

Three years on, there is no sign of growth – in the sense of gains in market share – at either Morrisons or Asda, the other mega buyout deal of 2021 (by TDR Capital and the Issa brothers, Mohsin and Zuber). In September 2021 Morrisons represented 9.8% of the UK

grocery market, on the research group Kantar’s numbers; last month it had 8.6%.

And the recent market share decline at Asda has been so acute that its chairman, Lord Rose, a retail veteran, said he was “embarrassed”. Asda’s share has fallen from 14.3% to 12.6% since 2021, which, in an industry where shifts usually happen in fractions of percentage points over years, is a plunge. Sainsbury’s, which for years was neck-and-neck with Asda in the race to be second to Tesco, is now furlongs ahead at 15.3%.

The conclusion from those statistics is the obvious one: servicing vast quantities of debt damages your competitive edge, especially when you’re up against

the muscle of conservatively capitalised Sainsbury’s and Tesco.

The degree of leverage put on the two buyout companies is best illustrated by the debt ratings awarded by the agency Moody’s. Morrisons, even after selling its petrol forecourts for £2.5bn and cutting debt by 35%, is still five notches away from investment grade. Asda is four away.

That is not to say either chain has been starved of capital. Asda has expanded into convenience stores and is spending £800m on an IT project to detach itself from its former owner Walmart’s systems. Morrisons still had enough cash to buy the McColl’s convenience chain.

Rather, the drag on performance shows in more subtle ways. Morrisons was out-gunned on prices at the height of the cost-of-living crisis and Asda seems to have fallen short on retailing basics such as product availability and controlling checkout queues. Yet all those failings, one can argue, stem from the relentless demand to hit annual cash flow targets to keep the buyout arithmetic on track.

Do not, though, assume the private equity barons will lose their shirts. Despite the trading struggles, there is probably still enough wriggle room in the numbers. Morrisons’ market share



▲ Mohsin and Zuber Issa were behind the Asda buyout in 2021

Morrisons found itself outgunned on prices at the height of the cost of living crisis and Asda seems to have fallen short on retailing basics

has stabilised in the past year under its new chief executive, Rami Baitieh; free cash could turn positive this financial year, thinks Moody’s. Asda’s position is weaker on the ground but the background noise created by Zuber Issa selling his stake to TDR Capital has now passed; and Rose should soon be able to hire a proper retail chief executive, as opposed to having Mohsin try to do the job himself.

But, if the financial bets come good in, say, five years’ time, it probably won’t be because Morrisons and Asda have suddenly learned to land competitive blows on Tesco and Sainsbury’s. It will be because the financial engineering – the replacement of equity with debt – was merely aggressive, as opposed to catastrophic. The sliver of equity in the original Asda deal was just £780m (or £200m on an ultra-strict definition) in a £6.8bn deal, so there’s obviously upside if borrowings can be sweated down to vaguely manageable levels.

But the notion that either buyout deal was seriously aimed at growth, as the rest of the world understands the term, was nonsense. The growth has happened at Sainsbury’s and Tesco. The buyouts were old-fashioned games of leverage and debt gymnastics, just as they looked on day one.

The Guardian

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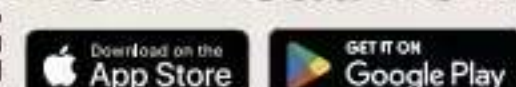
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Waitrose to open 100 stores in five years amid trading boost

Sarah Butler

Waitrose is planning to open 100 convenience stores over the next five years as part of a £1bn-plus investment in new outlets and shop refurbishments.

The upmarket grocery chain will begin a fresh phase of expansion with its first new store in six years in Hampton Hill, west London, by the end of this year.

James Bailey, Waitrose's executive director, said the group planned to open up to four large supermarkets as well as more Little Waitrose convenience stores over the next five years, some of which may include relocations from existing sites.

He said older stores were also being refurbished to feature "more of what people expect from us and love such as counters, unequalled service and a lot more fresh food". He said Waitrose was continuing to invest in technology to ensure there were no longer gaps on shelves after IT problems and a warehouse fire which led to stocking issues in 2022 and 2023.

Speaking ahead of the reopening of the group's large Finchley Road store in north London, which has been refurbished to include larger fresh meat and fish counters and a new out-of-hours pick-up point for online shoppers, Bailey said: "At the moment we are on a real positive upward trajectory."

The openings come as Waitrose has begun to regain market share after a tough period in which it came under pressure - from heavy competition from upmarket rival Marks & Spencer, and the cost of living crisis, in which shoppers sought cheaper options.

Waitrose recorded its strongest growth since November 2023 in the

► Fresh food counters in Waitrose stores are popular with customers, according to director James Bailey

PHOTOGRAPH: SIMON DAWSON/BLOOMBERG/GETTY

three months to 4 August, according to the latest data from analysts at Kantar.

The uptick in trading comes just before the arrival of Jason Tarry, a veteran of Tesco, who will replace Sharon White as the chair of Waitrose's parent group - the John Lewis Partnership (JLP) - next month. He is expected to oversee a return to prioritising retail at the group after White's strategy of diversification.

His arrival follows a period of turbulence under White, a high-flying former civil servant who had only recently begun to turn JLP's fortunes around after inheriting an over-expanded empire that delivered a series of punishing losses.

The group announced a return to profit in March but opted not to

'At the moment we are on a real positive upward trajectory'

James Bailey
Executive director

restore its famous annual bonus for workers who jointly own the group.

White also scrapped a target of moving towards 40% of JLP's profits coming from non-retail business by 2030 after criticism for too much focus on projects such as building homes to rent and expanding financial services, while its retail brands languished.



Gold prices hit record high amid prospect of US interest rate cuts

Jasper Jolly

Gold prices have hit a fresh high as increasing hopes of US interest rate cuts from the Federal Reserve prompted investors to buy more of the precious metal.

The spot price of gold rose to a record \$2,531.60 (£1,943.83) an ounce yesterday afternoon, up more than 1% on the day.

Gold bars generally weigh 400 troy ounces (12.4kg), so a standard gold bar is now worth more than \$1m.

Analysts have ascribed much of the rally to the prospect of interest rate cuts by central banks, led by the

US Federal Reserve. Lower interest rates tend to diminish the lure of bonds and shares because it diminishes the likely returns. That has prompted many investors to place their bets on gold increases.

Gold's practical uses are limited mainly to jewellery and electronics, and does not offer any returns except the possibility of future price rises.

However, it is viewed by investors as a safe haven during turbulent economic and geopolitical times. The wars in Ukraine and Gaza appear to have been a factor behind the surge in its value over the past two years, even as US interest rates rose from historic lows to the highest in 23 years.

While gold prices have risen by

two-thirds since the end of 2019, much of that gain has come since the start of March. Prices are up by more than a fifth since then, helped by the increasing expectation of rate cuts.

Antonio Ernesto Di Giacomo, a senior market analyst at the XS trading platform, said the recent surge in gold prices reflected a "rise in uncertainty and investors' flight to safe havens" as well as the prospect of



▲ A standard gold bar, weighing 12.4kg, is now worth more than \$1m

Bailey said: "The transformation of our Finchley Road store marks the next evolution of our journey to create a great shopping experience for our customers, underpinned by a high-quality product offering tailored to the local area, and the quality service we are synonymous with."

"In designing the store, we have taken time to understand how our customers like to shop, and used this knowledge to introduce new concepts that will be tested and rolled out nationally as we continue to work towards the Waitrose of the future."

Innovations include a Hot Wok ready-to-eat meals counter, Crosstown doughnuts in the bakery section, a hatch to allow collections of fast-track online orders by the likes of Deliveroo outside of the store's opening hours, and a dedicated internal space for click and collect orders.

The store will also house a dry aged beef cabinet and a dedicated parmesan section - reflecting local tastes that have made the Finchley Road store one of its biggest sellers of the Italian cheese, accounting for almost 15% of Waitrose parmesan sales.

Nearly £1bn wiped off BT shares after Sky strikes CityFibre deal

Jasper Jolly

Nearly £1bn was wiped off the market value of BT yesterday after Sky revealed that it would start using a rival's cables to deliver broadband internet to British homes.

Sky said yesterday it would offer broadband via CityFibre's fibre optic network, in a move that could put pressure on BT's Openreach business.

Sky is a customer of Openreach, but emerging rivals could allow it and other retail internet providers to negotiate lower connection fees.

BT's share price fell by more than 6% yesterday, undoing most of the gains since the news last week that the Indian conglomerate Bharti Enterprises had bought a 24.5% stake in the company. The price fell to 136p, down from 145p on Monday, leaving its market value at £13.5bn - a drop of nearly £1bn.

The addition of a second network by Sky had long been a concern for BT investors, according to analysts at Citi, an investment bank.

Openreach counted 4.7 million customers on 31 March who have the full-fibre connections needed for the fastest internet speeds. There are 14m homes in its catchment area who could buy full-fibre internet, and it is building connections to cover another 6m. There are 28m UK households.

BT hopes its scale will give it a cost advantage. Its main rival, Virgin Media O2, aims to cover 5m households by 2026. The two companies are the dominant players selling connections to retail internet providers, but they are coming under pressure from alternative networks, or "altnets".

CityFibre covers 3.8m households, and plans to expand to 8m in the next few years. Rivals include Community Fibre at 1.5m premises and nexfibre's XGS-PON at 1.1m, according to the industry website Think Broadband.

CityFibre's chief executive, Greg Mesch, said the Sky deal "cemented CityFibre's position as the UK's third digital infrastructure platform".

Mark Chapman, a telecoms analyst at Creditsights, a bond rating agency, wrote to clients last month: "Openreach's position in a fibre world remains challenged by altnets."

However, Danni Hewson, the head of financial analysis at AJ Bell, an investment platform, said: "CityFibre's modest scale and focus on rural areas suggest it shouldn't be a huge issue."

Additional reporting Reuters

3.8m

The number of households in the UK currently covered by CityFibre's fibre optic network

interest rate cuts from the Fed. "With economic, geopolitical and monetary factors driving this surge, gold is solidifying its position as a safe haven in times of volatility," he added.

The investment bank UBS has said prices could reach \$2,600 an ounce by the end of 2024.

Markets expect the Fed to cut its target rate for interest rates by 0.25 percentage points to between 5% and 5.25%. Investors will be listening closely to a speech on Friday by the Fed chair, Jerome Powell, for signs that rate-setters are content to cut at their next meeting on 18 September.

Other central banks have already reduced interest rates, with the European Central Bank cutting in June. The Bank of England followed suit at the start of this month, with its reduction in the base rate to 5% translating into cheaper mortgage deals. Seven of the UK's 10 biggest lenders now offer fixed-rate deals under 4%.

Weather

Wednesday 21 August 2024

UK and Ireland Noon today

Sunny

Mist

Fog

Sunny intervals

Hazy

Mostly cloudy

Overcast/dull

Sunny showers

Sunny and heavy showers

Light showers

Rain

Sleet

Light snow

Snow showers

Heavy snow

Ice

Thundery rain

Thundery showers

Temperature, °C

Wind speed, mph

Windy

35C

30

25

20

15

10

5

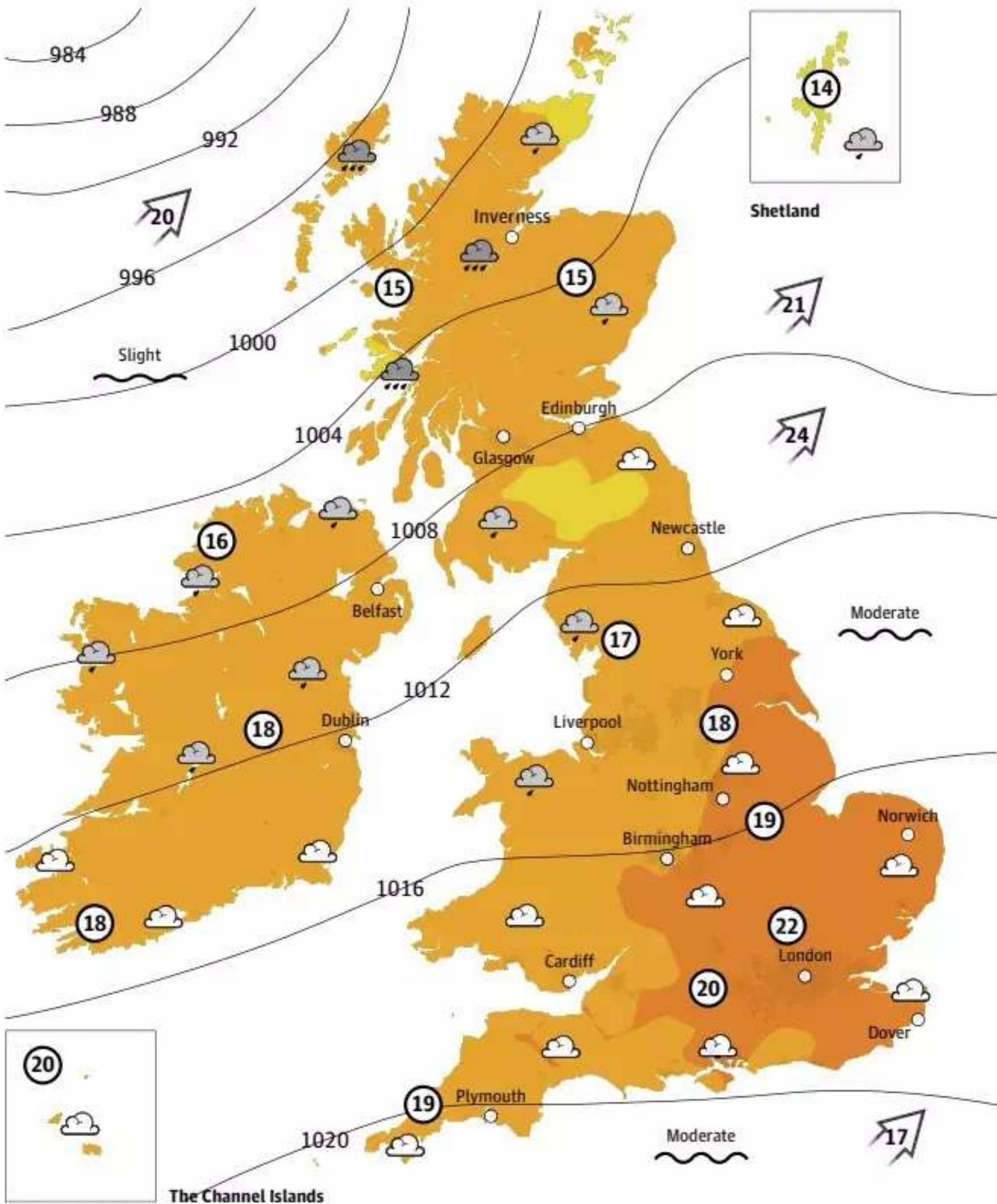
0

-5

-10

-15

-20



Forecast



Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO₂ readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

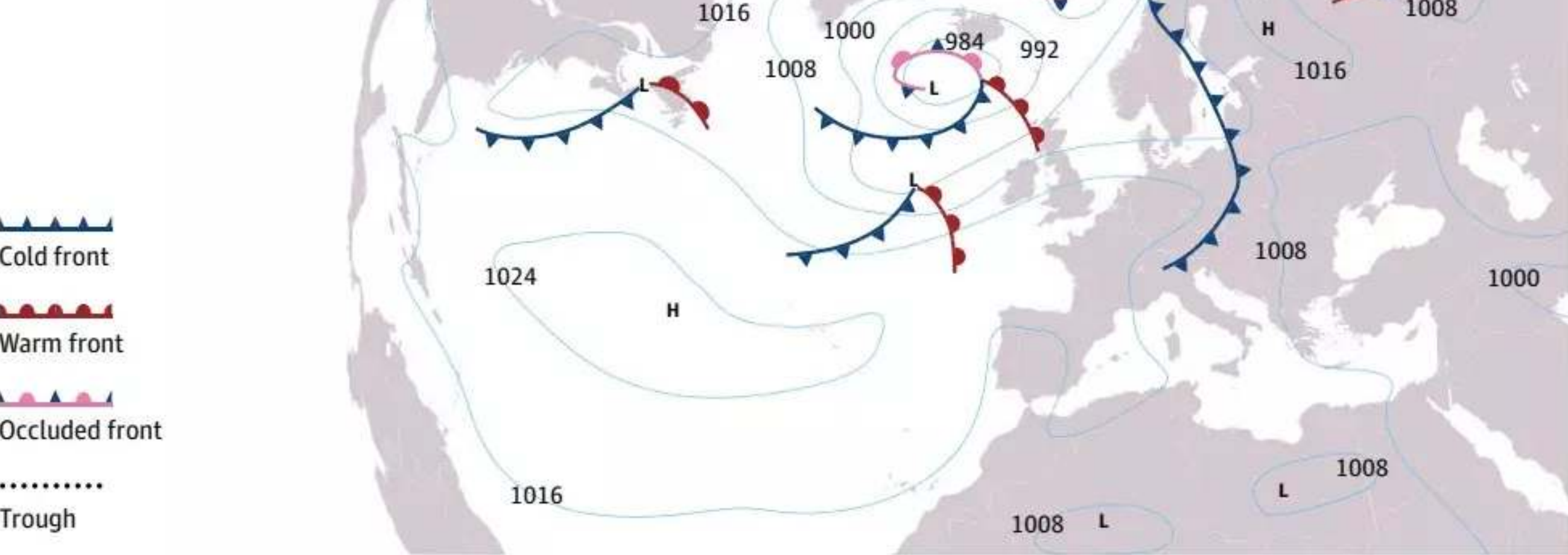
Latest	
19 Aug 2024	422.89
Weekly average	
11 Aug 2024	422.42
20 Aug 2023	419.03
20 Aug 2014	397.33
Pre-industrial base	280
Safe level	350

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK

London	Lows and highs: 15 22	Precipitation: 15%	Air pollution: Low
Manchester	15 18	25%	Low
Edinburgh	15 16	75%	Low
Belfast	13 16	80%	Low
Birmingham	14 19	25%	Low
Brighton	16 20	5%	Low
Bristol	15 19	20%	Low
Cardiff	15 19	20%	Low
Newcastle	14 16	25%	Low
Penzance	16 18	25%	Low

Atlantic front



High tides

Source: © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Times are local UK times

Aberdeen	0253	4.6m	1533	4.4m
Avonmouth	0916	13.5m	2134	14.0m
Barrow	0055	9.8m	1325	9.4m
Belfast	0026	3.7m	1259	3.4m
Cobh	0717	4.1m	1939	4.3m
Cromer	0808	5.4m	2059	5.1m
Dover	0039	6.8m	1259	7.1m
Dublin	0051	4.4m	1330	4.1m
Galway	0700	5.3m	1914	5.6m
Greenock	0201	3.6m	1431	3.3m
Harwich	0129	4.2m	1343	4.1m
Holyhead	--	--	1218	5.7m
Hull	0759	8.0m	2041	7.7m
Leith	0410	5.9m	1645	5.8m
Liverpool	0039	9.8m	1308	9.6m

London Bridge	0341	7.3m	1602	7.2m
Lossiemouth	0127	4.4m	1405	4.2m
Milford Haven	0809	7.2m	2029	7.6m
Newquay	0659	7.2m	1919	7.6m
North Shields	0458	5.4m	1738	5.3m
Oban	0738	3.9m	2003	4.3m
Penzance	0631	5.6m	1852	5.9m
Plymouth	0750	5.4m	2003	5.8m
Portsmouth	0049	4.8m	1326	4.9m
Southport	0020	9.5m	1242	9.3m
Stornoway	0846	4.9m	2055	5.4m
Weymouth	0802	1.4m	2014	1.7m
Whitby	0536	5.9m	1813	5.8m
Wick	0051	3.7m	1330	3.5m
Workington	0100	8.8m	1327	8.5m

Sun & Moon

Sun rises 0556
Sun sets 2009
Moon rises 2100
Moon sets 0756
Last Quarter 26 Aug

AccuWeather.com
Forecasts and graphics provided by AccuWeather ©2024

Lighting up

Belfast	2042 to 0614
Birm'ham	2019 to 0602
Brighton	2008 to 0559
Bristol	2020 to 0609
Carlisle	2029 to 0600
Cork	2044 to 0630
Dublin	2039 to 0618
Glasgow	2039 to 0604
Harlech	2029 to 0611
Inverness	2042 to 0557
London	2009 to 0557
M'chester	2023 to 0602
Newcastle	2025 to 0555
Norwich	2007 to 0549
Penzance	2028 to 0623

Plantwatch

On the banks of the River Don in Sheffield, within sight of the vast Meadowhall shopping centre, grow some highly exotic specimens – wild Mediterranean fig trees.

In the days of heavy industry, fig biscuits were a favourite local delicacy. After they were eaten, the fig seeds passed through people's digestive systems and ended up discharged as sewage into streams and rivers.

When Sheffield was the centre of a great steelmaking industry on the banks of the Don, the factories used its water to cool the hot metal and then dumped the waste warm water back into the river.

For the fig seeds, this would have seemed like being back in the Mediterranean, and they germinated and thrived in the warm waters. The trees grew into quite large specimens bearing fruit, and some of those trees are now thought to be over 70 years old.

The wild fig trees of Sheffield became an emblem of the city's industrial heritage, and after a campaign by local people including botanists and ecologists at the University of Sheffield, the figs were given protected species status, making them the only protected alien plant species in Britain. **Paul Simons**

Around the world

Algiers	32	Lisbon	30
Ams'dam	18	Madrid	36
Athens	31	Malaga	31
Auckland	15	Melb'rne	18
B Aires	13	Mexico C	24
Bangkok	34	Miami	33
Barcelona	29	Milan	33
Basra	47	Mombasa	28
Beijing	31	Moscow	23
Berlin	23	Mumbai	31
Bermuda	28	N Orleans	33
Brussels	20	Nairobi	24
Budapest	29	New Delhi	31
C'hagen	20	New York	22
Cairo	37	Oslo	19
Cape Town	13	Paris	21
Chicago	24	Perth	19
Corfu	32	Prague	23
Dakar	30	Reykjavik	12
Dhaka	30	Rio de J	26
Dublin	17	Rome	31
Florence	34	Shanghai	35
Gibraltar	28	Singapore	30
H Kong	28	Stockh'm	20
Harare	26	Strasb'g	23
Helsinki	22	Sydney	25
Istanbul	31	Tel Aviv	32
Jo'burg	25	Tenerife	28
K Lumpur	31	Tokyo	31
K'mandu	26	Toronto	20
Kabul	27	Vancouv'r	18
Kingston	33	Vienna	26
Kolkata	31	Warsaw	25
L Angeles	32	Wash'ton	25
Lagos	28	Well'ton	13
Lima	18	Zurich	23

Football

Heckingbottom in as Preston's latest manager

Page 40 →

Cricket

The making of Dan Lawrence, Test opener

Page 43 →



Sport

David Squires on ... heroes and villains of the Premier League's opening weekend

THE ANGUISHED LATE-SUMMER HOWLS RADIATING FROM GOODISON PARK SIGNALLLED THAT **THE PREMIER LEAGUE WAS BACK, BABY!** EVERTON FELL TO A 3-0 HOME DEFEAT TO A BRIGHTON SIDE NOW COACHED BY A PRECOCIOUS 13-YEAR-OLD GERMAN BOY CALLED FABIAN, AND SEAN DYCHE'S PAIN DIDN'T END THERE...



THE BIGGEST GAME OF THE WEEKEND CAME AT STAMFORD BRIDGE, WHERE PEP GUARDIOLA CAME UP AGAINST THE RESULT OF HIS ATTEMPTS TO CLONE HIMSELF, 'ENZO MARESCA'.



CHELSEA WERE RESOLUTELY OKAYISH IN THEIR 2-0 DEFEAT TO MANCHESTER CITY, SO MINI-P SHOULDN'T BE TOO WORRIED THAT TACTICS TODD LEFT BEFORE THE FINAL WHISTLE.



IT'S BEEN A TYPICALLY SERENE SUMMER AT THE BRIDGE. LAST MONTH, CHELSEA FINED ENZO FERNÁNDEZ FOR SHARING A VIDEO OF HIM AND HIS ARGENTINA TEAMMATES SINGING A RACIST AND TRANSPHOBIC CHANT ABOUT THE FRENCH NATIONAL TEAM, AND NOTHING COULD SEND A CLEARER MESSAGE OF HOW UNACCEPTABLE THEY DEEMED THIS TO BE THAN, UM, MAKING HIM CAPTAIN.



HOWEVER, BRERETON DÍAZ IS MERELY AN APPRENTICE TO THE TRUE MASTER OF THE DARK ARTS, **JAMIE VARDY**, WHOSE EQUALISER SECURED A VITAL, POSSIBLY TEMPORARY, POINT FOR LEICESTER AGAINST TOTTENHAM. IT WAS A PERFORMANCE IN THREE ACTS:



THE MOOD WAS MORE UPBEAT AT PORTMAN ROAD, AND SATURDAY LUNCHTIME TV VIEWERS WERE TREATED TO EXTENDED FOOTAGE OF ED SHEERAN, SLIGHTLY RUINED BY ANNOYINGLY FREQUENT CUTAWAYS TO IPSWICH TOWN V LIVERPOOL. HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDED:



A NEW SEASON MEANS A FRESH INTAKE OF BOUNCY-FRINGED LADS WHO JAMES CORDEN SAYS ARE DECENT ON FIFA. WHILE SWELLING THE SQUAD FURTHER WILL NO DOUBT PROVE TO BE ANOTHER MASTERFUL 4D SUBTLE GAMBIT FROM CLEARLAKE FC, 43 INTO XI DOESN'T GO, AND SO RAHEEM STERLING HAS BECOME THE LATEST BIG NAME PLAYER ON A LONG-TERM CONTRACT TO CLAMBER ABOARD CHELSEA'S SHIP OF LOST SOULS...



SOUTHAMPTON'S BEN BRERETON DÍAZ ALSO BROUGHT SOME COPA AMÉRICA FLAVOUR WITH A DISPLAY OF SUCH INTERNATIONAL CLASS S-HOUSERY AGAINST NEWCASTLE THAT THE SAINTS' AWAY KIT NOW COMES WITH ACCESSORIES.



THEY STILL LOST 1-0, BUT IN RUSSELL MARTIN THEY AT LEAST HAVE A MANAGER WITH THE APPEARANCE OF A DRILL SERGEANT ON AN SAS-BASED REALITY SHOW.



AT THE END, ANGE POSTECOGLOU STOOD SLUMPED HIS HANDS ON HIS KNEES, BUT THE CAMERAS CUT AWAY BEFORE HE SPRANG INTO A B-BOY ROUTINE IN SUPPORT OF AUSTRALIA'S MOST FAMOUS/TROLLED SPORTSPERSON.



WHAT COULD POSSIBLY HAVE BEEN MORE IMPORTANT FOR VIEWERS TO SEE THAN THE SPECTACLE OF A 58-YEAR-OLD MAN ATTEMPTING A PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE HEAD SPIN?!



'My friends are fighting - it is hard to focus on football'

Shakhtar Donetsk playmaker Georgiy Sudakov on the 'fear and grief' of Russia's invasion and why he is learning English

Ed Aarons

The compact surroundings of Arena Livyi Bereh in Kyiv's Osokorky district is not Camp Nou or any of Europe's other historic arenas, but it didn't matter to Georgiy Sudakov on Sunday. The 21-year-old playmaker, who more than two years earlier had been forced to take cover from falling Russian bombs in a makeshift bomb shelter with his pregnant wife, was named captain of Shakhtar Donetsk for their second league game of the new campaign.

"2012, this boy dreams of playing for Shakhtar Donetsk..." Sudakov wrote on Instagram after the 1-0 victory against the team they will share their 4,700-capacity stadium with this season. "It's 2024, this guy is wearing the captain's armband for Shakhtar Donetsk! Dream, work, believe. After all, dreaming is not harmful. Dreaming is so important. Everything in life is possible!"

It is a measure of Sudakov's standing at Shakhtar that after a summer of transfer speculation that seemed to be paving the way for his departure, he has been entrusted with the armband by Marino Pusic - the manager who guided the club to their second successive title last season. They rejected a €40m offer from Napoli in January for the player who has racked up more than 100 appearances and scored in the Champions League against Barcelona last season.

While there are understood to have been enquiries from several clubs across the continent - including from the Premier League - Sudakov remains a Shakhtar player for now. But he has been thinking about the day he will have to leave the club he joined as a 14-year-old from Metalist Kharkiv.

"I dream of playing in Europe's top five leagues," he says. "But it is difficult to prepare for that - you will only feel everything once you're there. It's a different

mentality, different culture, different language, but I am ready for this challenge and I am looking forward to it. I am learning English..."

Now with a two-year-old daughter called Milana, who was born a few months after the war against Russia began, he is focused on repeating the league and cup double of last season and making another impression in Europe, where Shakhtar have direct entry to the expanded Champions League. Sudakov has never been to the club's home ground - the Donbas Arena in Donetsk - after they were forced to play their matches elsewhere because of the Russian occupation of the region in 2014.

Having broken into Shakhtar's first team, making his debut when they defeated Real Madrid at the Santiago Bernabéu in October 2020, it was not only Sudakov's career that was in jeopardy a little more than year later. In an emotional post on social media in March 2022 his former coach at Shakhtar, Fernando Valente, revealed that Sudakov and his wife, Yelyzaveta, had been sheltering in a bunker under their parents' home in Kyiv after Russian attacks intensified on the Ukrainian capital.

"I cry for this couple and for all of the young players and friends I've left behind in a Ukraine that gave me happiness for two years," he wrote. "My heart is broken."

They took the risky decision to travel to Lviv for Yelyzaveta to give birth to Milana because it was considered safer, although the journey took two days because of the scale of Russia's bombardment. The Sudakovs have returned to Kyiv, but their thoughts are never far from what is happening on the frontline.

"I have acquaintances and friends who are fighting," he says. "It is hard to focus on football, but I understand that this is the only chance to glorify our country on the European scale. Sporting achievements, every game for the national team or in the Champions League, is an incredible chance to show the whole world what our country is capable of, how courageous and independent it is. And to remind every time that Russia's invasion is causing a lot of fear and grief to our people and needs to stop."



'The WSL can be the most entertaining in the world'

Nikki Doucet, in charge of the two top women's leagues in England, tells **Tom Garry** why the game needs to interact with its own 'Swifties' to grow



The most powerful person in English women's football takes a breath, scans the room and seems to pause for reflection. Nikki Doucet, the chief executive of the new company that is now running the top two women's leagues in the country, has just been asked how it is going and the look in her eyes suggests there's a lot she wants to say. "It's a rollercoaster and it's hard, but it's fantastic. It's so hard but it's so great."

The former Nike director is at the national football centre in St George's Park, to sit down for her first newspaper interview since taking on the job of leading the team that runs the Women's Super League and Women's Championship. That responsibility was legally transferred over from the Football Association on 15 August but she has been in the post since November during the transition. It is a job she wanted to take on "because it's an opportunity to help push women's rights forward, through the power of sport" and she believes wholeheartedly in the game's future.

The new entity, previously dubbed "NewCo" and now renamed temporarily as "Women's Professional Leagues Ltd (WPLL)" until a longer-term name is chosen, is going to be under immense pressure to deliver. "The job is to create and build the most distinctive, competitive and entertaining women's football club competition in the world," she says. "That's the thing we need to obsess over."

The "we" is Doucet's new, four-strong, all-female executive leadership team. "It's because they're the best people," she says. "I don't want to create a gender narrative, that's not what I'm trying to do. I was lucky to have great leaders from both genders. I've also had bad leaders from both genders."

"I believe in thought-diversity and a workforce that represents the population - I think our game needs

to do more for diversity - but I care most about getting the best people so I can empower them to be great. Ruth Bader Ginsburg [the former US supreme court judge] said: 'Why shouldn't the supreme court be all women?'

"The qualities of being a female are also qualities of strong leadership, whether that's emotional intelligence, empathy, compassion - my definition of leadership has changed since I've become a mother. I want to put in place structures that reduce stress from the team, to allow them to thrive."

"I was listening to a podcast this morning that said, for Google, one of the stresses there was they had a lot of employees commuting from San Francisco to Silicon Valley,



▲ The BBC will continue to show live WSL matches in the 2024-25 season

so they invested in buses with wifi - that's the type of thought leadership I'm inspired by: 'How do I create a work environment that's super high-performing, has employee retention, thought diversity, and that supports people?' I care about that."

It has already been a summer of highs and lows, perhaps best summed up by a 24-hour period in late June when - a day after the London City Lionesses owner, Michele Kang, staged a Mayfair press conference and pledged to invest in a world-class facility to try ultimately to win the WSL - Reading requested to withdraw from the Championship because of financial concerns and soon dropped down three divisions.

"It's an incredibly devastating situation," Doucet says of Reading. "This is a startup. At the beginning of any evolution, you're going to have some investors who believe in this future, like Michele Kang and some others, but then you're going to have other investors that say: 'My risk profile is different in terms of what I'm willing to invest today. I can't make the numbers work so I'm not going to invest.'"

"That's just the reality of

▼ Nikki Doucet says being chief executive of the WPLL is 'a rollercoaster'

WPLL



investment, how is it going? "It's harder than I thought," Doucet says. "Because women's football has to do more to prove the return on investment, so even though we have stats that are comparable to other sports, other challenger sports and other challenger brands, you're constantly having to prove that there's a market."

"It's different to men's football. It's easy to sell men's football today. So we have to invest and learn how to talk to a fanbase that we don't talk to normally and we have to create different content."

Understanding the supporters is something Doucet's teams have spent a huge amount of time analysing and she believes they have not yet realised the full potential of the fanbase. Some of their data and research suggests there are three types of attendees and one - which she likens, in terms of demographic, to Swifties - she feels are not yet being fully served.

Doucet calls the core fans who come week in, week out "arguably the most important - they're the visionary consumers ahead of all the trends". Then there is a section of fans who are regular men's football match-goers taking their children to a women's game because it is family friendly. She believes a vast, third group has transformational potential.

"In the middle, you have a fan that's come in through the Lionesses, untethered to the men's game. They're not tribal and they're learning about us. They're trying to find highlights, they love the players and that's the biggest group that the football ecosystem doesn't know enough about."

"That's your 'Taylor Swift fanbase' for that particular analogy. And I don't think anyone talks to them in the way that we need to."

The WSL displays enormous variations in fan engagement. This season, Arsenal will play at least 11 home games at the Emirates Stadium and they have repeatedly filled the 60,000 seats, but last season other clubs had attendances of less than 1,500.

That is symbolic perhaps of a sport undergoing rapid change. And there will be many more changes because it is clear Doucet's team are undertaking a wide-ranging review of every aspect of the WSL and Championship and not ruling anything out.

Asked if the leagues could expand the number of teams, whether a playoff system could be introduced and if she is open to B teams akin to those seen in Spain, Doucet gives virtually nothing away. "Being independent will allow us to review what the right structure is that the fans want. The things we care about will be: Are we creating a really competitive league? Does it have jeopardy? And are we telling the storylines of the players and rivalries within the season? We need to review what gives us that, long term."

Whatever they decide to do, the whole sport will be watching very closely.

where we are. Providing the right infrastructure for players and staff is expensive and it is an investment ahead of revenue - an investment in the next generation of sport - and we have to find the owners that believe in that."

The 23 remaining clubs in the WSL and Championship are shareholders in the WPLL, along with the Football Association, and the company has received a £20m interest-free loan from the men's Premier League, but what everybody involved knows is needed, for the long term, are lucrative revenue streams and a broadcast deal that can help the leagues to stand on their own feet.

For 2024-25 the domestic television deal, shared between the BBC and Sky Sports, has been rolled over for one more year. Commercial deals are also high on the agenda. So when it comes to attracting

'It's easy to sell men's football today. So we have to invest and create different content'

Foden and Shaw scoop PFA awards as City win another double

Palmer and Clinton pick up PFA young player awards for their displays last season

Sheldon Dragwidge

Manchester City enjoyed a successful night at the Professional Footballers' Association awards as Phil Foden and Khadija "Bunny" Shaw were crowned PFA players' player of the year by their peers.

Chelsea's Cole Palmer and the Manchester United midfielder Grace Clinton - who spent last season on loan at Tottenham - picked up the PFA's young player of the year awards at the annual ceremony.

Foden, who also won the Football Writers' award in May, became the fourth City player in the last five years, and the first Englishman since Wayne Rooney in 2010, to win the award after his 19 goals and eight assists helped the club to a record-breaking fourth consecutive Premier League title.

The 24-year-old edged out his teammates Erling Haaland and Rodri to claim the prize, with Arsenal's Martin Ødegaard, Palmer and Aston Villa's Ollie Watkins also shortlisted in the top six.

Shaw was instrumental in City's WSL title battle with eventual champions Chelsea as she finished top scorer in the league with 21 goals - including three hat-tricks in just 18 appearances.

The 27-year-old Jamaica international saw off competition from her teammates Lauren Hemp and Yui Hasegawa alongside the Chelsea trio of Erin Cuthbert, Niamh Charles and Lauren James to pick up the award.



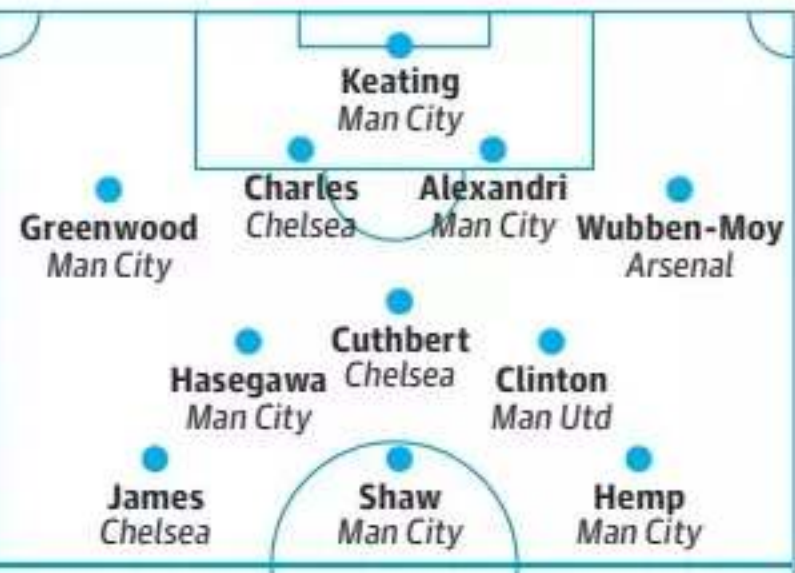
Khadija Shaw scored 21 Super League goals for City last season

PFA picks

Premier League XI of the year



WSL XI of the year



Clinton, who made her senior international debut for England in February, was voted the women's young player of the year after playing a starring role during her loan spell at Spurs from Manchester United, scoring four goals and assisting another four in 20 appearances.

The 21-year-old edged out James, Aggie Beever-Jones, Khiara Keating, Maya Le Tissier and Jess Park.

Palmer enjoyed a stunning debut season at Stamford Bridge which saw him rack up 22 goals and 11 assists as he won the award ahead of two of his international teammates Bukayo Saka and Kobbie Mainoo, with Alejandro Garnacho, João Pedro and Michael Olise the other nominees.

However, the Chelsea winger did not make the PFA's team of the year which featured four players from City's title-winning team while last season's runners-up Arsenal had five players in the XI.

The veteran MK Dons defender Dean Lewington and the England legend Fara Williams received the men's and women's Merit awards for their contributions to the sport.

Lewington broke the all-time English record for most league appearances for a single club by making his 771st appearance for MK Dons in the 2023-24 campaign.

Williams ended her career as the most capped England player in history, making 177 appearances and scoring 40 goals for the Lionesses over an 18-year period.

In a tradition that started last year, the PFA also handed out individual player prizes for the Championship, League One and League Two.

The former Leeds winger Crysenio Summerville was voted player of the year for the Championship after he spearheaded the club's ultimately unsuccessful promotion bid, scoring 19 goals and contributing nine assists. The Netherlands Under-21 international earned a summer move to West Ham following his outstanding campaign.

League One's top scorer Alfie May was voted as the top player in that division after 23 goals for Charlton, while Notts County's Jodi Jones was League Two's player of the year.

Results

Football

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Qualifying playoffs: First leg Bodø/Glimt 2 Crvena Zvezda 1; Dinamo Zagreb 3 Qarabag 0; Lille 2 Slavia Prague 0

CONFERENCE LEAGUE

Qualifying playoffs: First leg Noah 3 Ruzomberok 0

BRISTOL STREET MOTORS EFL TROPHY

Northern: Group A Tranmere 1 Everton U21 3. Group B Salford 0 Port Vale 2. Group F Barnsley 2 Manchester Utd U21 3. Group G Chesterfield 1 Man City U21 1 (Chesterfield won 4-2 on pens). Group H Rotherham 2 Mansfield 0 Southern: Group A Shrewsbury 1 Fulham U21 2. Group B AFC Wimbledon 1 Wycombe 0; Crawley 2 Brighton U21 2 (Crawley won 4-3 on pens). Group D Stevenage 1 Crystal Palace U21 0. Group F Burton 3 Leicester U21 1. Group G Bristol Rovers 3 Tottenham U21 3 (Tottenham U21 won 6-5 on pens). Group H Reading 3 West Ham U21 1

VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Eastleigh	3	3	0	0	8	3	+5	9
Gateshead	3	2	1	0	8	2	+6	7
Sutton	3	2	1	0	7	1	+6	7
Oldham	3	2	1	0	5	1	+4	7
York	3	2	1	0	4	1	+3	7
Hartlepool	3	2	1	0	2	0	+2	7
Barnet	3	2	0	1	4	3	+1	6
Yeovil	3	2	0	1	4	3	+1	6
Altrincham	3	2	0	1	2	5	-3	6
Southend	3	1	2	0	3	1	+2	5
Forest Green	3	1	1	1	7	4	+3	4
Rochdale	3	1	1	1	4	2	+2	4
Aldershot	3	1	1	1	5	5	0	4
Dag & Red	3	1	1	1	3	3	0	4
FC Halifax	3	1	1	1	3	3	0	4
AFC Fylde	3	1	1	1	6	7	-1	4
Solihull Moors	3	1	0	2	5	6	-1	3
Woking	3	1	0	2	1	3	-2	3
Braintree	3	1	0	2	2	5	-3	3
Tamworth	3	0	1	2	1	4	-3	1
Wealdstone	3	0	0	3	1	4	-3	0
Maidenhead	3	0	0	3	1	5	-4	0
Ebbsfleet	3	0	0	3	4	10	-6	0
Boston	3	0	0	3	0	9	-9	0

Barnet 1 Forest Green 0; Braintree 2 Aldershot 1; Eastleigh 2 Solihull Moors 1; Halifax 1 Gateshead 1; Maidenhead 0 Altrincham 1; Oldham 1 Fylde 1; Southend 2 Boston 0; Tamworth 0 Hartlepool 1; Wealdstone 0 Sutton 1; Woking 1 Dag & Red 0; Yeovil 3 Ebbsfleet 2; York City 1 Rochdale 0

VANARAMA NORTH

Buxton 2 Darlington 0; Chester 2 Radcliffe 0; Chorley 1 Scarborough 2; Curzon Ashton 1 Oxford City 0; Hereford 1 Peterborough Sports 1; Kidderminster 1 Brackley 0; King's Lynn 2 Rushall 1; Leamington 2 Alfreton 2; Marine 0 Farsley 3; Needham Market 0 Scunthorpe 1; South Shields 2 Warrington 1; Spennymoor 2 Southport 0

VANARAMA SOUTH

Bath 1 Torquay 2; Chesham 1 Weston-S-Mare 2; Dorking 2 Boreham Wd 2; Enfield 1 Slough 6; Farnborough 2 Eastbourne 0; Horncchurch 1 St Albans 0; Maidstone 0 Hampton & R 0; Salisbury 1 Truro 1; Weymouth 0 Chippenham 2

SCOTTISH LOWLAND LEAGUE

Berwick 0 Stirling Uni 7; Bo'ness 3 CS Strollers 2; Broxburn 3 Gala Fairydean 0; Caledonian 1 Broomhill 0; Celtic II 3 Linlithgow Rose 0; Cowdenbeath 1 Cumbernauld Colts 1; East Kilbride 3 East Stirlingshire 0; Tranent 0 Albion 2

SPORTS DIRECT NORTHERN IRELAND PREMIERSHIP

Ballymena 0 Crusaders 1; Cliftonville 1 Dungannon 0; Glenavon 0 Linfield 3; Glentoran 0 Coleraine 0; Loughgall 2 Portadown 2

Tennis

WTA TENNIS IN THE LAND (Cleveland, Ohio, USA)

First round: S Kenin (US) bt K Volynets (US) 6-2 2-6 7-5; V Tomova (Bul) bt L Davis (US) 6-1 6-4; S Sorribes Tormo (Sp) bt Wang Y (Chn) 6-4 6-1; K Siniakova (Cz) bt S Ishii (Jpn) 6-7 (5-7) 6-3 7-6 (7-5); J Bouzas Maneiro (Sp) bt V Gracheva (Fr) 4-6 6-3 6-2; P Stearns (US) bt M Uchijima (Jpn) 6-0 1-6 6-1; G Minnen (Bel) bt J Cristian (Rom) 6-3 7-6 (7-5); A Bogdan (Rom) bt L Fernandez (Can) 1-6 7-6 (7-2) 6-2

WTA ABIERTO GNP SEGUEOS (Monterrey, Mexico)

First round: L Glushko (Isr) bt K Volodko (Ukr) 6-3 3-6 6-3; L Sun (NZ) bt C Paquet (Fr) 7-6 (7-3) 6-3; C Osorio (Col) bt A Tomljanovic (Aus) 6-2 7-6 (7-3); E Avanesyan (Arm) bt E Cocciareto (It) 7-6 (8-6) 6-1; E Andreeva (Rus) bt A Kalinina (Ukr) 6-1 6-4; M Carle (Arg) bt V Kudrmetova (Rus) 1-6 7-5 6-4

ATP WINSTON-SALEM OPEN (North Carolina)

Second round: A Vukic (Aus) bt A Mannarino (Fr) 7-6 (7-5) 2-6 6-1; R Hijikata (Aus) bt A Cazaux (Fr) 4-6 6-3 7-6 (7-4); A Rinderknech (Fr) bt C O'Connell (Aus) 6-3 6-4; T Seyboth Wild (Br) bt N Borges (Por) 7-6 (7-2) 6-2; Z Svajda (US) bt F Cerundolo (Arg) 6-4 6-4; D Goffin (Bel) bt L Darderi (It) 6-2 6-4; L Sonego (It) bt D Stricker (Swi) 6-4 6-1

US OPEN QUALIFICATION (Flushing Meadows, New York)

Men: First round: B Harris (GB) bt J Cerundolo (Arg) 6-3 2-6 7-5; J Wolf (US) bt O Crawford (GB) 6-4 6-4 Women: First round: Y Miyazaki (GB) bt D Jakupovic (Svn) 6-2 6-4

Cricket

THIRD WOMEN'S ONE-DAY INTERNATIONAL

Stormont, Belfast Ireland 122. Sri Lanka 123-2. Sri Lanka beat Ireland by eight wickets.

Snooker

XI'AN GRAND PRIX (China)

First round: B Hawkins (Eng) bt S Donaldson (Sco) w/o; R Walden (Eng) bt A McGill (Sco) 5-3; Yuan S (Chn) bt N Robertson (Aus) 5-2; H Vafaei (Iran) bt D Emery (Wal) 5-3; D Wells (Wal) bt J Leclercq (Bel) 5-3; T Un Nooh (Tha) bt Zhou Y (Chn) 5-2; K Wilson (Eng) bt He G (Chn) 5-2; Xu S (Chn) bt A Burden (Eng) 5-4; G Dott (Sco) bt Zhang A (Chn) 5-2; Pang J (Chn) bt P Deaville (Eng) 5-0; D Dale (Wal) bt N Saengkham (Tha) 5-3; Xiao G (Chn) bt S Maguire (Sco) 5-1; S Murphy (Eng) bt J Clarke (Wal) 5-0; M Selby (Eng) bt A Hill (Ire) 5-0; S Bingham (Eng) bt J Jones (Wal) 5-3; R O'Sullivan (Eng) bt B Revesz (Hun) 5-2; M Allen (NI) bt D Lilley (Eng) 5-1

Cycling

VUELTA A ESPAÑA

Stage 4 (Placencia - Pico Villuerca, 170.5km): 1 P Roglic (Svn) Red Bull-BORA-hansgrohe 4hr 26min 49sec; 2 L Van Eetvelt (Bel) Lotto Dstny; 3 J Almeida (Por) UAE Emirates. Selected others: 26 A Yates (GB) UAE Emirates at 1m 29s Overall standings: 1 P Roglic (Svn) Red Bull-BORA-hansgrohe 14hr 33min 08sec; 2 J Almeida (Por) UAE Emirates at 22s; 3 E Mas (Sp) Movistar at 32. Selected others: 28 A Yates (GB) UAE Emirates at 1m 56s

Fixtures

Football (7.45pm unless stated)

Champions League

Qualifying playoffs: First leg Dynamo Kyiv v Salzburg (8pm); Malmö v Sparta Praha (8pm); Midtjylland v Slovan Bratislava (8pm); Young Boys v Galatasaray (8pm)

Conference League

Qualifying playoffs: First leg Guimarães v Zrinjski (5.45pm) Scottish Lowland League Gretna 2008 v Hearts II

Cricket

First Men's Test (first day of five) England v Sri Lanka, Emirates Old Trafford (11am) First Men's Test (first day of five) Pakistan v Bangladesh, Rawalpindi (6am)

Greg Wood's racing tips

York 1.50 JM Jungle (nb) 2.25 Ruling Court 3.00 Los Angeles 3.35 Calandagan (nap) 4.10 Samui 4.45 Profitable Edge 5.20 Yes I'm Mali Carlisle 2.05 Khaldiya 2.40 Gundogan 3.15 Flowstate 3.50 Ribble River 4.25 Greenwich 5.00 Vintage Love 5.30 Oso Rapido 6.02 Kelpie Grey Worcester 4.50 Don Occhetti 5.25 Galloping Pride 5.55 Ghost Jury 6.30 Idylle Sauvage 7.00 Wilful 7.35 Malago Rose 8.05 Midnight Jewel Kempton 5.50 Afentiko 6.20 Defence Missile 6.50 Jayyash 7.25 Moon Angel 8.00 Matharu 8.30 God Bless America

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Sport

Football

Brazil police end inquiry into Antony allegations

Jamie Jackson

The Brazilian police investigation into allegations of violence against the Manchester United winger Antony has been dropped by the Sao Paulo civil police “without indictment”, his legal representative has stated.

Antony, who denied the allegations, is understood to have voluntarily been interviewed by Brazilian police last June. The winger, who was not arrested or charged, was also the subject of a Greater Manchester police investigation.

Antony's former partner Gabriela Cavallin made numerous accusations which were investigated by GMP. A second woman, Ingrid Lana, has also made allegations against him which related to a meeting in Manchester.

It is not known which allegations GMP investigated but Antony denied all the claims in an interview on Bra-



▲ Antony made 38 appearances for Manchester United last season

zilian TV last September. Yesterday the 24-year-old's lawyers issued a statement.

It said: “The defence of footballer Antony Matheus dos Santos, in light of the news published by the [Brazilian] press this Tuesday, publicly confirms that the police investigation conducted by the São Paulo Civil Police has been closed without police indictment.

“The defence always believed that the investigations, which were conduct[ed] under seal, would demonstrate Antony's innocence.”

Whether GMP's investigation remains open is unclear. The force could not be contacted by the Guardian yesterday evening.

United granted Antony a leave of absence last September to deal with the allegations. At that time, he said: “I want to reiterate my innocence of the things I have been accused of, and I will fully cooperate with the police to help them reach the truth.”

Transfer roundup

Maupay loan snubbed as Broja heads to Ipswich

Andy Hunter
Ben Fisher
Jacob Steinberg

Everton have rejected an offer from Marseille to sign Neal Maupay on loan and are close to re-signing Asmir Begovic a year after the veteran goalkeeper left Goodison Park. Maupay, who spent last season on loan at Brentford, is surplus to requirements at Everton and a player the club is willing to sell to raise funds for Sean Dyche.

Marseille's offer of a season-long loan for the striker was rejected because it included only an offer to buy Maupay next summer and not an obligation. His contract expires at the end of this season.

Begovic is expected to rejoin Everton once he has completed a medical. The 37-year-old signed for QPR last summer after his Everton contract finished but is a free agent again after leaving the Championship club and Everton want more experienced cover for Jordan Pickford.

Ipswich are signing the striker Armando Broja on loan from Chelsea for the season. The Albanian had a poor loan spell at Fulham in 2023-24. The 22-year-old Cobham academy product will sign for Ipswich permanently for £30m next summer if they avoid relegation to the Championship.

Wolves are trying to sign Aaron

Ramsdale from Arsenal and have submitted a loan proposal with an option to buy the goalkeeper next summer. They recognise Arsenal would prefer a sale this window - Ajax, Southampton and Bournemouth are among those to have expressed an interest.

Ramsdale joined Bournemouth from Sheffield United in 2017, before rejoining the Blades in 2020. He moved to Arsenal at the start of the 2021-22 summer and is keen to play at the highest possible level. Wolves acknowledge it may be a difficult deal to complete because of the finances involved.

The Burnley midfielder Sander Berge is poised to join **Fulham** for £20m plus £5m of potential add-ons. The Norway international had been linked with a move to Manchester United.

Southampton have signed the midfielder Mateus Fernandes from the Portuguese champions Sporting Lisbon for £15m. The 20-year-old, who spent last season on loan at Estoril, has signed a five-year deal.

All change at Preston again

Preston will host Luton on Saturday with Paul Heckingbottom in the Deepdale dugout - their third manager in three games at the start of the Championship season. Ryan Lowe left last Monday and his former No 2, Mike Marsh, quit his role as caretaker before the post-match press conference after a dismal 3-0 defeat at Swansea on Saturday. Heckingbottom, 47, takes the reins on a permanent basis after being sacked by Sheffield United last December. **Tony Paley**

Tennis

Sinner cleared of wrongdoing over two failed doping tests

Continued from back page

Sinner suffers from a skin condition called psoriasisiform dermatitis on his feet and back, which causes itchy skin and the 23-year-old's scratching can lead to small cuts and sores.

Sinner and his team argued that he had been contaminated through the treatment he received from Naldi, who did not use gloves. Three scientific experts confirmed that this was a plausible explanation for the presence of clostebol metabolites.

Crucially, Sinner maintains that he did not know about either Ferrara's possession of Trofodermin or the fact that Naldi was using it. The ITIA accepted Sinner's arguments on the balance of probability and the independent tribunal concluded that the player had “no reason” to suspect the

presence of Trofodermin around him or any anti-doping risk from his treatment with Naldi.

Karen Moorhouse, the ITIA's chief executive, said: “Following that investigation, the ITIA accepted the player's explanation as to the source of the clostebol and that the presence of the substance was not intentional. This was also accepted by the tribunal. We thank the independent tribunal for the speed and clarity of its decision in relation to the player's degree of fault.”

The ATP wrote in a statement: “We are encouraged that no fault or negligence has been found on Jannik Sinner's part. We would also like to acknowledge the robustness of the investigation process and independent evaluation of the facts under the Tennis Anti-Doping Pro-

“The ITIA accepted the explanation as to the source of the clostebol”

Karen Moorhouse
ITIA chief executive



▲ Jannik Sinner, the world No 1, won the Cincinnati Open final on Monday
WALLY NELL/ZUMA PRESS WIRE/SHUTTERSTOCK

Sport In brief

Vuelta a España

Roglic sends message with climb to red jersey

The three-time Vuelta champion Primož Roglic won the first mountain stage of this year's race after a ferocious climb to Pico Villuerca yesterday. On a baking hot 170km fourth stage, with the race crossing from Portugal into Spain, Roglic burst past Lennert Van Eetvelt to snatch the win. Van Eetvelt paid the price for celebrating too early, the Belgium raising his arm in triumph then banging his handlebars in frustration as Roglic sneaked past on the line. The Slovenian moved into the overall race lead, taking the red jersey from Belgium's Wout van Aert, who came home more than 10 minutes after Roglic. Portugal's João Almeida finished third on the stage and sits in second place overall. **Reuters**

Women's T20

Bangladesh unrest sees World Cup shift to UAE

The Women's T20 World Cup in October has been moved to the United Arab Emirates from Bangladesh following violent protests in the scheduled host nation, the International Cricket Council has announced. Student-led anti-government demonstrations and continuing civil unrest have led to Bangladesh's former prime minister Sheikh Hasina resigning and fleeing to self-exile in India. Given the security concerns, the ICC said the T20 World Cup, scheduled for 3-20 October, will



▲ Primož Roglic pounced on the line to claim stage four in the baking heat

gramme, which has allowed him to continue competing. This has been a challenging matter for Jannik and his team, and underscores the need for players and their entourages to take utmost care in the use of products or treatments. Integrity is paramount in our sport.”

Neither of Sinner's positive anti-doping tests had previously been made public. The first positive test took place in competition on 10 March during Indian Wells and trace amounts of a metabolite of clostebol were also found in an out-of-competition test on 18 March, just before the Miami Open, which Sinner won. His semi-final result at Indian Wells has been disqualified along with 400 points and the \$325,000 (£250,000) prize money earned.

While athletes receive automatic mandatory provisional suspensions after being notified of an anti-doping rule violation, it can be appealed and removed if an athlete demonstrates at a hearing that the violation likely involved a contaminated product or a substance of abuse.

Sinner was provisionally suspended from 4 April to 5 April, shortly after winning the Miami Open, and then just before the Madrid Open between 17 April and 20 April. Both times, the provisional suspension was cut short after Sinner successfully appealed. In a busy period of the ATP calendar during the clay-court season, both short-lived provisional suspensions occurred during off-weeks.

Some of Sinner's fellow players have been critical of the findings. “Can't imagine what every other player that got banned for contaminated substances is feeling right now,” wrote Denis Shapovalov.

Sinner has continued to compete on the ATP Tour as normal in what has been a breakout season, with the Italian winning his first grand slam title at the Australian Open and rising to No 1 shortly after. On Monday he won his second Masters 1000 title at the Cincinnati Open and he boasts a tour-leading 48-5 record this year.

instead take place across two venues in the UAE - Dubai and Sharjah. The Bangladesh Cricket Board will retain hosting rights. “It is a shame not to be hosting the Women's T20 World Cup in Bangladesh as we know the BCB would have staged a memorable event,” the ICC chief executive, Geoff Allardice, said. “However, they will retain hosting rights. We look forward to taking an ICC global event to Bangladesh in the near future. I would like to thank the team at the BCB for exploring all avenues to try and enable the event to be hosted in Bangladesh, but travel advisories from the governments of a number of the participating teams meant that wasn't feasible.” England and the debutants Scotland have both qualified for the 10-nation tournament, and were drawn together in Group B, with their fixture initially scheduled to be the final game of the opening stage on 14 October. South Africa and West Indies are also in Group B, along with Bangladesh. Group A features the defending champions Australia, plus India, New Zealand, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. **Reuters**

Sport
Cycling

► Jason Kenny is relishing the chance to 'teach new people to win' with the UCI world championships on the horizon

DAVID DAVIES/PA

11

Number of cycling medals Team GB won at the Paris Olympics – including gold medals for Tom Pidcock and the women's team sprint trio

'It's healthy that people feel they can celebrate other medals'

Sir Jason Kenny reflects on his first Olympics as Team GB men's sprint cycling coach – and the 'money pit' of pets

Emma John



Jason Kenny reckons standing on an Olympic podium is overrated. In fact, it was always his least favourite part of being an athlete. "It's just a bit awkward, really," says the man who did it nine times. "You have to suck it up – but it's like forced fun, you know?"

Apparently Britain's greatest Olympian is not one for savouring the moment. "Actually my favourite thing was always building up and preparing for the next one. People see that as a negative thing – 'you never stop and soak it up'. But I don't really want to soak it up."

This is why Kenny is sitting in an office at the Manchester velodrome just days after returning from Paris. The man who took over as British men's sprint cycling coach in 2022 is already back training his squad for the UCI world championships in October. His results will be keenly scrutinised: more than one eyebrow has been raised at British Cycling's performance in Paris, where it registered its lowest medal haul in 20 years.

You could say the sport has been a victim of its own success. Team GB still finished with more medals than anyone else in the velodrome; others might regard four bronze, three silver and a gold as a triumph. But for Brits who have lived two golden decades with Chris Hoy, Bradley Wiggins and Victoria Pendleton – not to mention Kenny and his wife Laura – it feels a little like failure.

"We're trying to bring new people on, to teach new people to win," Kenny says. He points out that this year's track team was missing all four champions from Tokyo – he and Laura to retirement, Matt Walls to road cycling, Katie Archibald to a freak injury. "We've



got a phenomenal team and that was proven by the medals – our goal now has to be to try and flip more of those back into gold."

There is no sign that Kenny is anxious or disappointed at the results. As an athlete he was famed for his levelheaded approach, and he looks genuinely delighted to be back at the National Cycling Centre, the workplace he often cycles to from his home in Cheshire.

"It isn't the most pleasant ride in the world, there's some busy roads and roundabouts to tackle. But I'm a different person if I pedal here than if I sit in my car. If I can bank that hour of exercise each way I feel like I'm winning. And it's one less car burning a load of dirty oil that your kids are ultimately gonna breathe in."

It has been three weeks since he spent time with his wife and two sons, even though they, too, were in Paris. Laura – Britain's greatest female Olympian, now everyone's favourite BBC sofa guest – had a higher-profile Games than he did. Kenny didn't realise how well his wife had connected with audiences – "she was good, wasn't she?" – but then, he's used to her stealing his thunder. "The whole point of my job is to not have any thunder. I'm in the back, supporting the riders, driving the vans."

How did they manage childcare while both on constant call? "Well, badly, I suppose," he says, a little ruefully. "One of our parents came out to help." Now he's home where the animals are demanding his time – two sheep, three alpacas, two dogs, four rabbits and four ducks. Apparently the alpacas look after the dozen chickens – "they chase off any problems, which is quite nice" – and their fleece has provided a rug for the home. "But generally they're just a money pit."

On the first day of racing in the

Paris velodrome, Laura told BBC viewers that she had never seen her husband look so nervous. And yet both men's and women's campaigns got off to a stellar start. There was a first win in the women's team sprint, and a heroic silver for the men, whose majority-debutant team raced for gold against the all-conquering Dutch world champions.

Seeing Anna Henderson take silver in the women's time trial, and Tom Pidcock's last-gasp victory in the mountain biking, had both helped with morale, says Kenny. "I remember my first Olympics in

'The whole point of my job is not to have any thunder. I'm in the back supporting the riders'

Beijing, just as we landed Nicole Cooke won on the road, and you just feel like: 'We're away now.'" But where in previous Games those early wins presaged a tidal wave of victory, in Paris a lack of experience began to tell.

"I think there was a big high after the team events and that it was quite draining in a way," Kenny says. "The Olympics is spread out over quite a long time and after the first couple of days you saw people starting to look a little bit tired. That's something that we potentially missed out on a little bit, with it being a lot of people's first times."

Jack Carlin's fiery tangles in the individual sprint were a source of anxiety – Kenny calls them "hard to watch" – but then the 27-year-old is a more emotional rider than his undemonstrative coach ever was. It has taken a while

to learn how to work with Carlin, staying "robotically" calm between races, establishing a routine and a language they both understand.

"As a rider I just wanted my coaches to be honest and consistent, but I've realised that it's not that simple," Kenny says. "What I've found challenging is how you can say one thing to five different people and they hear five different things."

He says he has had to learn to say "no" to his riders – Carlin especially. "We plan to the max, there's nothing left to chance, but sometimes they're like: 'Why are we doing this?' and I can't remember. It's good fun, but it's important that you're robust."

Being "robust" would probably have been a euphemism in previous regimes. The ride-or-die approach that leaked out in stories of bullying and harassment has triggered a clear change in direction at British Cycling.

The appointment of nice-guy Kenny – who you struggle to imagine raising his voice to anyone – is consistent with that. It's also evident in Emma Finucane's delighted reaction to her two individual bronze medals, despite being tipped for all gold.

You can't imagine Pendleton proclaiming she felt "on top of the world" after two third-place finishes. Has the culture of

British Cycling edged towards a more Gen Z sensibility, celebrating effort as much as success? "Maybe," Kenny says. "It's healthy that people feel they can celebrate other medals, in the context of how you win them. I know when we won silver in Tokyo that felt like the maximum we could achieve, so for us that was success."

Does Kenny sense disappointment at the final velodrome tally? "I wouldn't say we're disappointed. We had someone on every single podium, which I think shows that we are still very, very competitive. So yeah, it is frustrating when you're so close to so many wins and we only got one on the track. But the fact that we're still there and pushing hard does fill me with optimism."

His seven-year-old son Albie is already riding a bike, although, ironically given his parentage, he's "not mad keen on it". When Kenny got back from Paris he discovered that his one-year-old, Monty, had not only started walking in his absence but "actually, running, pretty much".

It would need a similarly miraculous development for his male sprinters to topple Roy van den Berg, Harrie Lavreysen, and Jeffrey Hoogland in just two months' time. The Dutch are, Kenny admits, "a country mile" ahead of the rest of the field.

But he has always been a planner, and his sights are already set on LA. "I think we've learned a lot in this last year or so. We've taken a good step forward and now we've got four years to go and it's really exciting, the prospect of maximising that four years. I'm excited to close that gap."

Pope audition offers glimpse of future while honouring the past

England's stand-in captain will stick to familiar template but has chance to stake claim

Ali Martin
Emirates Old Trafford

If training has been anything to go by this week then Ollie Pope has already shown himself to be a shrewd England captain. Dan Lawrence has been performing drills for short-leg, suggesting the newbie in the lineup will be stationed in Pope's usual spot against Sri Lanka.

Essex apparently offered danger money to players plonked at boot hill in the 1980s but the best batter of the county's current crop – albeit a Surrey strutter these



days – will be on the same match fee as his teammates.

Maybe this is the first tactical misstep of the Pope regime. After all, he

▲ Pope described Graham Thorpe (above) as 'a great man' and will honour his former mentor this week

TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN

has been the one with the cat-like reflexes at short-leg the past few years; a best friend to the spinners and the quicks, forever chirping away under the lid and catching mice when they pop out. Pope has not even started the job, has performed it a handful of times for Surrey and has now moved one of the team's strengths elsewhere in the field. Perhaps alarm bells should be ringing, like the ones that briefly interrupted Sri Lanka's net session yesterday.

And so there is a first slab of analysis in what is Pope's three-Test audition to be the long-term successor to Ben Stokes as captain. Although how to assess a stand-in is not entirely straightforward given the brief.

When Stokes stepped in for Joe Root for the first Test against West Indies in the bubble summer of 2020,

for example, he found a note in the captain's blazer telling him to "do it your way". But there was little to signpost the Bazball of recent times during that four-wicket loss, the team set up to chisel out runs rather than muscle them and featuring a handful of the players selected and emboldened by Stokes.

While Stokes has told Pope to bring a personal touch, be it team talks or making plays out in the middle, this is the context in which the audition should probably be viewed. Along with Brendon McCullum, the head coach, England's totemic all-rounder has set an iron-cast template and, given he will be on the ground for all three matches as he recovers from his hamstring tear, a divergence is unlikely. Pope will be leading a weak-

So begins three Tests of analysing Pope's audition to be the successor

First Test

England
DW Lawrence, BM Duckett, OJD Pope (capt), JE Root, HC Brook, JL Smith (wkt), CR Woakes, AAP Atkinson, MJ Potts, MA Wood, Shoaib Bashir
Venue Old Trafford, Manchester
Start 11am
TV Sky Sports Cricket/
Main Event
Radio BBC 5 Live Extra

Sri Lanka
FDM Karunaratne, KN Madushka, BKG Mendis, ADM Mathews, DM de Silva (capt), LD Chandimal (wkt), PHKD Mendis, NGRP Jayasuriya, RMMP Ratnayake, AM Fernando, MVT Fernando
Umpires JS Wilson (WI) and PR Reiffel (Aus)
TV umpire CB Gaffaney (NZ)
Referee DC Boon (Aus)

Weather

Today	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Cloud and breezes	Rain until later	Showers, some sun	Rain until later	Persistent light rain
Max 19C	Max 19C	Max 18C	Max 17C	Max 19C

Over-by-over Follow our coverage live on the web
theguardian.com/cricket



► Ollie Pope joins Shoaib Bashir for an Old Trafford nets session as the new England Test captain prepares to lead his side against Sri Lanka

GARETH COPLEY/
GETTY IMAGES

ened team with its balance disrupted by the loss of Stokes – the tail now longer to accommodate Matthew Potts in a five-man attack – and Lawrence a makeshift opener due to Zak Crawley's busted finger.

Pope's first press conference as England Test captain – he will be the 82nd man to perform the role but just the fifth in the past 15 years – was a pretty assured, confident affair. He stressed a desire for continuity of messaging and in particular regarding the handling of his bowlers, something he has been observing closely during this summer of renewal.

They make for two very different characters – Stokes from working-class Cockerham in Cumbria, Pope born in Chelsea – but they have been very much aligned for some time, Pope's own Test career revived by the backing of his captain two years ago.

A glimpse of this came in Hyderabad this year when Pope addressed the players on the third morning, reminding them to remain in the present despite a seemingly dire match situation. He then set about marshalling an astonishing fightback with the high-wire, sweep-heavy 196 on which victory was secured.

As Pope put it yesterday, batting may be the most straightforward part of the job over the next three weeks; the one area where he can focus solely on his own game in the knowledge it is for the betterment for the team as a whole.

This is also the first Test match in England since the death of Graham Thorpe, whose impact as hero, batting coach and friend to much of the current generation was profound. Pope and his players will wear black armbands for the duration of the match, while spectators will applaud his life before the start of play on day one.

"He was a great man," said Pope. "I remember him saying one thing to me, which was: 'Never let the runs you're scoring define you as a person.' In a bit of a rut when you're young, that was exactly what I needed to hear."

"It shows what a people's person he was. He was loved in the changing room. He's such a sad loss to everyone, to the country, his family and the boys as well. He is missed and we'll honour him this week."

Like West Indies before them, Sri Lanka enter the series after a single warm-up and the scorecard after their seven-wicket defeat to the Lions was not pretty. This is their first Test since April, their first three-match series for six years and their first red-ball cricket in England since 2016. Unlike West Indies, there are proven batters in their lineup – 71 Test centuries in the XI, compared with England's 47 (with Root making up 32 of them) – local input from Ian Bell as a coach, plus a group of seamers brought through under their previous head coach, Chris Silverwood.

As well as Kamindu Mendis, a typically unorthodox Sri Lankan talent who bowls finger-spin both left- and right-handed, their front-line slow bowler, Prabath Jayasuriya, has taken a remarkable 71 wickets in 12 Tests.

Spinners tend to enjoy the bounce here and so short-leg, the spot vacated by captain Pope, could well be in the game.

▼ Dan Lawrence has developed his batting after being exposed to the international game

PHILIP BROWN/GETTY IMAGES



Lawrence's journey from cricket-mad kid to new Test opener

Batter's former youth coach has no doubts that he has the dedication and confidence to succeed on England return

Tanya Aldred

Dan Lawrence, England's newest Test opener, will roll into action at Old Trafford today, more than two years since the last of his 11 Tests. Barry Hyam has been keeping an eye on him since he turned up on the Essex age-group pathway as an under-11, the cricket-obsessed son of the Chingford groundsmen, who lived in a flat above the ground and liked to doodle before he went out to bat.

It wasn't until Lawrence got a little older that he started to stand out. "At a young age, you can see the batting talent and skill, but you can't immediately see who is going to make it," Hyam says.

"It is not until you can see the application and dedication players put in that things become clearer. One of the biggest things with Dan as he started to come through into second- and first-team cricket was that confidence and belief in his ability."

"Ultimately, really deep down, that belief comes from within, but we like to think a small part is the environment we set up, the playing without restraint we try to encourage in our young players."

"He is such a lovely nice lad, but just had that really strong self-belief. It doesn't come across in an arrogant way, he believes he has the ability to adapt to any situation."

That enviable self-belief was clear when, aged 17, Lawrence scored a hundred in his second first-class game, bashing 161 against Surrey, where he now plays, at the Oval, becoming the third-youngest player to hit a Championship century.

It was there again when he flamed five consecutive sixes off a Shoaib Bashir over in the

Championship in June. And bubbles away as he tackles his newest assignment, opening against Sri Lanka, shoe-horned into position because of Zak Crawley's finger injury and England's desire to get the young man with the Bazball spirit into the XI.

"I haven't done it for a while," he says. "But I'm really excited to get out there with Ducky [Ben Duckett] and hopefully put on a show."

Now the Essex Academy director and second-team head coach, Hyam's career shadowed Lawrence's for a while. He was head coach of the emerging player programme Lawrence joined at under-14, then took over the second team as Lawrence started to find a footing there. He has no doubts Lawrence will be able to adjust to the new role. And it won't be for the first time.

"In the early stages of his second-team career we encouraged him to open the batting as often as he could because then he got to play the better bowlers and against the newer ball," Hyam says. "Then, when he started to play in the Essex team, Alastair Cook and Nick Browne were in position and that opportunity wasn't there for him to open."

'One of the biggest things as he started to come through was that belief in his ability'



Lawrence has waited patiently for another chance

"He became a real strength in that middle-order and we built around him. But I strongly believe he can adapt again. He'll do it in his own way. After all, when batting at three or four, he will have had times throughout his career when he has had to come in early and face a new ball."

When Lawrence left Chelmsford at the end of 2023 to move to the Oval, the sighs of disappointment from Essex fans could be picked up on the live stream, but he didn't leave them without a final show of fireworks – three hundreds including a beast of an innings at Blackpool against Lancashire that had spectators scattering for safety.

The move has been a successful one for both parties. Essex are happy with his replacement, Jordan Cox, and Lawrence has bolstered the already star-stuffed Surrey lineup, averaging more than 50 in the Championship and being set free to bowl his egg-whisk off-breaks, taking 15 wickets.

It is an action Lawrence sometimes squirms at when he sees it. "It feels completely normal to me," he says. "Then, when I watch it back, it could be quite tough to watch sometimes, but what comes out of the hand is generally pretty good and that's all I focus on."

"He always fancied himself as a good bowler," says Hyam, "and even though he has a very unconventional action, he gets lots of spin and shape on the ball. Over the last few years he has added consistency to his bowling."

"His batting has developed, too. He's had to adapt his technique a little bit, having been exposed to international cricket. There is slightly less movement, he is more still and more balanced, and reaps the rewards."

Hyam will be keeping a close eye on events at Old Trafford. "As coaches we spend a lot of time with kids coming through the system and we follow their progress closely, even when they move on. Anyone that knows Dan knows he comes from a really good place, he's a very caring and considerate young man." As well as a talented one, who has had to wait patiently at the door for another chance.

Brains trust Stand-in captain looks to draw on Stokes' wisdom

Continued from back page

player for them," De Silva said. "We have a good chance."

Pope, who has been the team's vice-captain since last May, has played 24 of his 46 Tests with Stokes in charge and even if he were completely absent the all-rounder's influence would be significant. "Having the vice-captaincy role has given me the opportunity to get my head around it if this opportunity came about," Pope said.

"I've thought about it on the pitch, watched him closely. I know how well he's managed our bowlers

especially and I've picked his brains a little bit on that."

Though he led Surrey eight times in the T20 Blast this year, Pope has been captain in one first-class game – a County Championship match against Glamorgan in 2021 when, promisingly, he posted the highest score of his career.

"I had a bit of a stint in the T20s," he said. "I know it's a different format but the first thing I reminded myself was when it's batting time it's batting time and the rest of the time you can be the captain and think a little bit more about the team."

"Harry Brook being vice-captain, he's got a great cricket brain and guys like Joe Root out there, there's plenty of experience to bounce a few ideas off."

Shortly after Sri Lanka arrived yesterday at Old Trafford for their final training session they were forced to evacuate their dressing room because a fire alarm was accidentally

activated, a moment emblematic of their imperfect preparation. Their players have had a single warmup outing, against England Lions, which they lost by seven wickets.

"The conditions are quite different to Asian countries so I think we wanted to play a few matches, but that's what we got," De Silva said. "I've no idea why."



▲ Sri Lanka captain Dhananjanaya de Silva talks to coach Sanath Jayasuriya GARETH COPLEY/GETTY IMAGES

Nikki Doucet on the WSL

'We want the most distinctive women's club competition in the world'

Exclusive interview Page 38 →

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Sport

World No 1 avoids ban

Sinner cleared of wrongdoing over two failed doping tests

Tumaini Carayol

Jannik Sinner, the men's world No 1 tennis player, has avoided a ban after he successfully argued that two failed anti-doping tests in March had been a result of contamination through his physiotherapist.

Following an independent tribunal last week, a panel ruled that Sinner bore "no fault or negligence" for twice testing positive for trace amounts of the banned



Jannik Sinner tested positive for clostebol but bore 'no fault or negligence'

substance clostebol. Clostebol is an anabolic androgenic steroid (AAS) derived from testosterone and the concentrations of 121 picograms per millilitre (pg/ml) and 122pg/ml in Sinner's two positive tests amount to less than a billionth of a gram. With over-the-counter drugs in Italy containing clostebol, numerous Italian athletes have tested positive for the substance in recent years.

"I will now put this challenging and deeply unfortunate period behind me," Sinner wrote in a statement. "I will continue to do everything I can

to ensure I continue to comply with the ITIA's anti-doping programme and I have a team around me that are meticulous in their own compliance."

After Sinner's positive test, the International Tennis Integrity Agency, which handles anti-doping and corruption in tennis, consulted with scientific experts and then took the case to the independent tribunal, which was held on 15 August.

Sinner's arguments hinged on his fitness trainer Umberto Ferrara's purchase of Trofodermin, an over-the-counter spray used to heal cuts. While Sinner and his team were staying at a villa in Indian Wells before the Masters 1000 event, Giacomo Naldi, Sinner's physiotherapist, accidentally cut his finger on 3 March with a scalpel.

After the bandage was removed, Naldi used Ferrara's Trofodermin each morning on the cut between 5 and 13 March. During that period, Naldi continued to treat Sinner with full body massages and he bandaged Sinner's feet. 40 →



▲ Ollie Pope will lead England in the three-Test series against Sri Lanka

Pope takes the England reins but it is 'still Stokesy's team'

Simon Burnton

Ollie Pope goes into the first of three games as England's Test captain, standing in for the injured Ben Stokes for the series against Sri Lanka, saying it is "still Stokesy's team". But he also suggested the next few weeks is a chance to prepare for a future without the 33-year-old all-rounder, who is recovering from a torn hamstring.

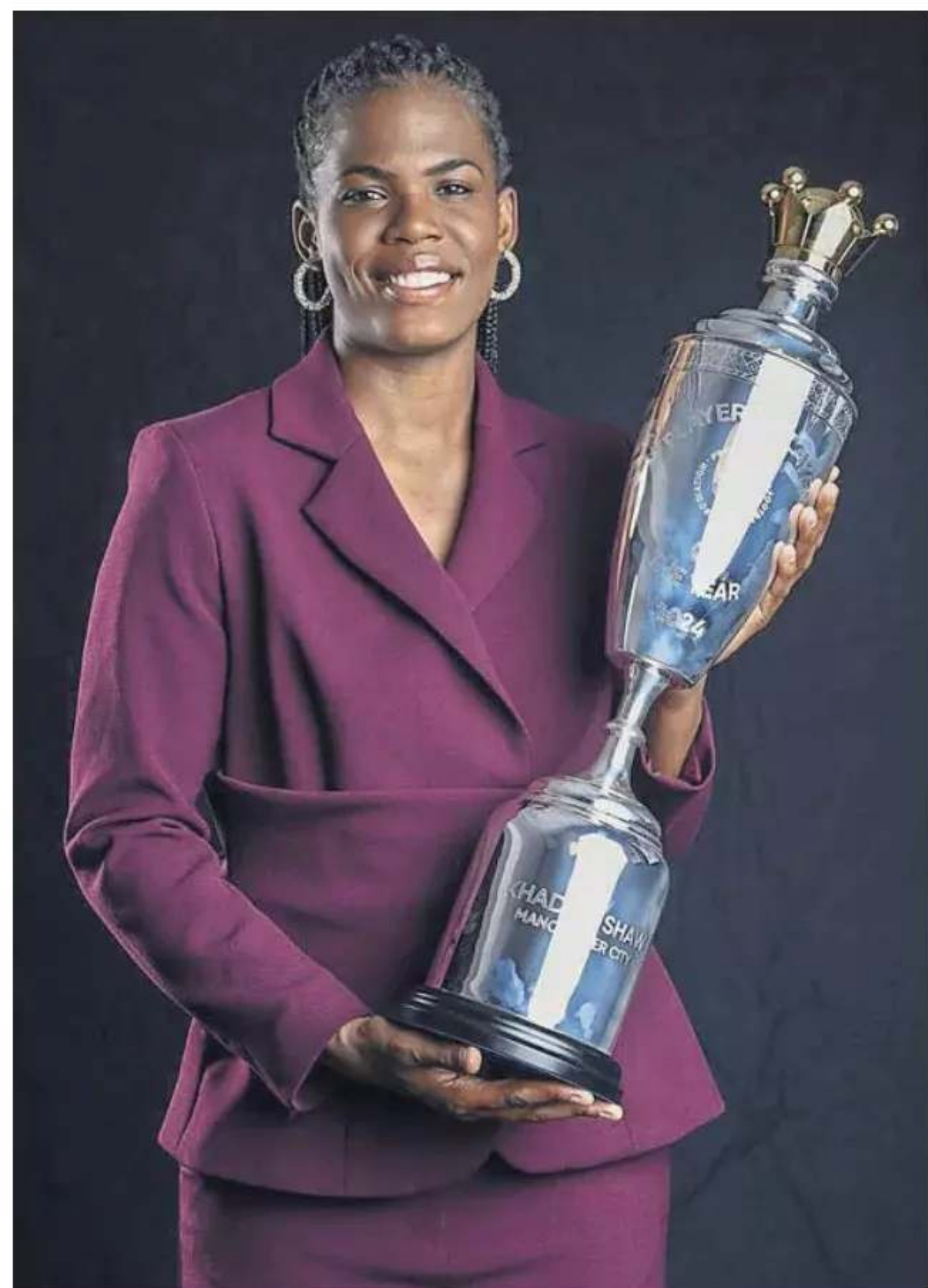
"We'll miss Stokesy the captain and Stokesy the all-rounder," Pope said, "but for us as a team, in the long term, it's a good opportunity to test ourselves without him."

Stokes is unable to play after sustaining a muscle tear while playing for Northern Superchargers in the Hundred this month, but he will be anything but absent. He is with the team in Manchester as he continues his rehab work and is expected to be watching from the dressing room throughout the series.

"That's a great thing for the changing room to have and me to have," Pope said. "He's pretty clear that he wants me to go out and do my thing my own way, but he's more than happy to talk things through when I want to lean on him. It's great to have him around. None of the messages are going to be different, we're not going to play any differently. I'll just be getting similar messages across, in my own way."

Dhananjaya de Silva, going into his fourth game as Sri Lanka captain, feels Pope should cope well in his new role: "He's played quite a few Test matches and he knows what to do."

While the England camp makes light of Stokes's absence, Sri Lanka's captain is hoping it may prove decisive. "With the balance of the side he's the key 43 →



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City do the double at PFA awards

Foden and Shaw crowned players' players of the year

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+ Jason Kenny 'We're teaching new people to win' * Page 41 →

